

SEVENTEEN SELECT
SERMONS:

Preached chiefly on Sacramental Occasions;

By the Rev. Mr. ALEXANDER HOWE,
Late Minister of the Gospel in the Parish of Tarves.

Published at the desire of the Parishes of *Tarves*
and *Newhills*.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE FIRST

CONTAINING

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

FROM 1625 TO 1649

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND

CONTAINING

THE HISTORY OF THE

SELECT SERMONS.

Action Sermon, Tarves, June 1, 1746.

Isaiah liii. 6.

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have
turned every one to his own way, and the
Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

SOME of the clearest revelations of the Messiah, and the most exact descriptions both of the sufferings and glories of the blessed Jesus that are to be met with in any part of the Old Testament, are contained in this book, and especially in this chapter, on which account the inspired author of it, Isaiah, has justly got the name of the evangelical or gospel prophet. In the words we have an abridgment (as it were) of the whole gospel, that is, of our misery by sin, and our recovery by Christ; a chosen subject of daily meditation to the real christian, but especially worthy of our closest attention on a communion Sabbath, when we are assembled in the kind providence of our most gracious God to commemorate the dying-love of our dear Redeemer in the holy supper; and may God, even our Father, be in the midst of us to bless us, and the good Spirit of God breathe on us all, and put us in a fit frame for the holy action we are now met about in the name of Christ, in obedience to his command, and in a dependence on

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his righteousness and strength for our acceptance and through bearing.

In discoursing from these words I shall,

First, Explain a little upon our misery by sin, expressed in the first part of the text, *All we like sheep have gone astray : we have turned every one to his own way.*

Secondly, I shall explain a little upon our recovery by Christ, as plainly spoken of in the second branch of the text, *And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all :* and conclude with some improvement.

First, Our misery by sin is spoken of, *All we have gone astray*, namely, from God the fountain of happiness, and every one of us have turned to his own way, out of the paths of righteousness, out of the way that leads to the paradise of God, which is illustrated by a most familiar and significant emblem, *like sheep*. We fell so low from the elevation and dignity of our reasonable and immortal nature, when we became sinners against God, that an emblem must be borrowed from the beasts that have no understanding, in order to point out our misery and our folly.

Like sheep, of all creatures the readiest to wander and lose its way ; of all creatures the least sagacious to find the way home when once it is strayed ; of all creatures the most apt blindly to follow in herds the false track of any one or more stragglers that stray out of the way, as well as of all creatures the most in danger when once out of the right way, either to stumble into a pit, and so perish, or else to be devoured by every

every beast of prey, and the least able to protect itself from their assaults. Oh! just and natural description of the brutish sons of men, now in their low, and lost, and straying estate, and most applicable in every of these instances mentioned to one and all, were I to pursue the metaphor, but I drop it with only having observed this to shew its justness and propriety, and shall lay before you our misery as it is described in the text in the three following views: 1. All of us have gone astray from God, as we are all involved in the first apostasy, and thereby become sinners by nature and practice. 2. All of us that even may be converted, have shamefully strayed from God since we were brought back. 3. Every one of us, whether converted or unconverted, have our own particular bias to wander out of God's way into some by-path, which may be called our own way. A sentence or two on each of these will throw some light upon this branch of the text.

1. All we have gone astray from God as we are involved in the common apostasy, and thereby become sinners by nature and practice. How sadly true is this of us all both from the clear evidences of revelation as well as our own woful experience. Vain man is born like the wild ass's colt, utterly averse to be under law to God, but bent to stray according to his own lawless will into crooked paths: we all certainly proceed from those who are morally unclean. And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No, not one, Job xiv. 4. Hence David in the midst of his penitent confessions, poured

out from a heart deeply affected and humbled for his sins, cries out, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me,' Psal. li. 5. He humbles himself before God under a sense of the natural depravity and corruption of his nature, as a spring of impurity within him always ready to send forth corrupt streams. And a small measure of self-aquaintance will bring us all to a like acknowledgment of a rooted depravity in all our natures, a violent disregard and aversion to that which is good, joined with a strong addictedness and propensity to that which is evil, ready to betray us into the hands of every temptation to sin against God that we are assaulted with; which leads me on to observe farther, that this root of bitterness, this corruption of our natures, has actually produced sad strayings and fruits of unrighteousness in all our lives: so say the lively oracles of God, who best knows what is in man, all have sinned and come short of the glory (or image) of God, Rom. iii. 23. There is not a just man that liveth here and sinneth not, Eccles. vii. 20. Who can understand his errors? Mine iniquities are more in number than the hairs of my head, said the psalmist of himself, Psal. xix. 12. and xl. 12. But reflect, Christians, and your own experience will confirm all this to be your own case. What cause have we all this day to confess to God that we have been transgressors from the womb; that the imaginations of our hearts have been evil from our youth, Gen. viii. 21. That is, from our earliest capacity of acting that we can remember. This made the psalmist (and we have the same cause)

cause) to cry to God, Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions, according to thy mercies. Remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, Psal. xxv. 7. And even since we arrived at riper years, how shamefully have we gone astray from God, how many of our secret faults are in the sight of his countenance, how many wilful or presumptuous sins can our own hearts charge us with, and God is greater than our hearts, how evil and unthankful have we been towards God, how far have all run away like prodigals from our Father in heaven, how faulty have we all been in relative and personal duties! Ah! we have been so far from continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them, that in all things we have offended, and may justly admire this day that patience and that goodness of God that has borne with us so long, and has not been provoked to abandon us absolutely, and leave us without any restraint to have strayed into hell itself long before now.

2. All of us that may be converted already, even such have gone astray from God, in innumerable instances since they were brought back. It is the express language of scripture, that the best on earth are renewed but in part, and have the remainders of corruption cleaving fast to them while they are in this state of distance and imperfection, which will produce less or more of wandering and straying from the right path of God's testimonies. It was long after the psalmist's first conversion that he made the penitent confession, Psal. cxix. 176. 'I have gone

astray like a lost sheep. Seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.' It was long after the apostle Paul's becoming a convert and an apostle of Christ too, that he made the feeling and sorrowful complaint, 'I know that in me dwelleth no good thing; and how to perform that which is good I find not, for the good that I would, that I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do. I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. vii. It is after backsliding or straying converts that the blessed God sends the call, James iii. 14. O backsliding children! I am married to you, saith the Lord, ver. 12. Return, O backsliding man, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord; only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast trespassed against the Lord thy God. And now, christians, which of us all this day that may even have tasted the bitterness of sin, and felt the pangs and throes of the new birth in saving repentance for it, and conversion from it, who have covenanted against it, and sworn to be steady in the ways of God upon the symbols of Christ's body and blood more than once at a communion-table, but must lay our hands on our mouths and our mouths in the dust, and plead guilty before God in the language of David, I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Review but yourselves since the last communion you were at, and you will find that in many instances

instances you have swerved from the rule, either neglected quite, or else carelessly performed many duties as well as boldly transgressed the holy commandment; a good reason, christian, for you to eat your passover with bitter herbs. As sinning and straying against grace received is a peculiar aggravation and carries with it vile ingratitude: oh, 'tis because he is God and not man that the sons of Jacob themselves are not consumed. But I proceed to observe,

3. That every person, whether converted or unconverted, has his own particular bias to turn aside and stray from God into a by-path which may be called his own way, *Every one of us, &c.* There is nothing more obvious to every observer than the vast difference of tempers, inclinations and pursuits there is among the sons of men, arising either from a difference in their natural make or constitution, in their education, the customs and habits they have been early addicted to, the company, the example, the business, and occupation in life they choose to follow; which lays them open to successful assaults of temptations from satan, the world, and the flesh, to turn out of God's way; this the psalmist calls, by the name of his iniquity Psal. xviii. 23. I kept myself from mine iniquity; the apostle to the Hebrews calls the sin that most easily be-fets us, Heb. xii. 1. Our blessed Lord calls it the sin that's dear to us as a right eye or a right hand, and my text a turning unto our own way: this is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, Matt. xxii. 5. and Luke xiv. 16. Those that were bidden followed their

their own way and strayed from commanded duty, one had married a wife and could not come, another had his yoke of oxen to try and he could not obey God's call, a third had his merchandise which killed his relish for the gospel-favour and salvation, a fourth had bought a piece of ground that made him easy about a heavenly inheritance, like the young man's love of his possessions which made him part with Christ tho' he was forward to have come up to all his other terms. Herod was like to have been a convert of John Baptist, till he touched his darling sin. "It is not lawful to thee to keep thy brothers wife," Felix was in love with Paul's preaching till he disturbed him in the course of his intemperance and unrighteousness, and so of others; and now tho' the grace of God makes a great change, yet right-eye and right-hand sins, which easily beset them, have not lost all their power to lead even them astray and turn them out of God's way. Think, christians, how often you have been turned aside to your own way, and how little you have done to mortify that predominant corruption and sin which so easily misleads you, and bring it to the cross of Christ, as it were, to be crucified, to be weakened and mortified; bemoane yourselves on account of it, in the language of Ephraim, "I have been as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me." Implore renewed aids of divine grace to excite you to be more watchful in keeping yourself from your iniquity, and more resolute in laying aside those sins that most easily have hitherto turned you aside unto your own way.

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These things are just grounds of the deepest humiliation of our souls before ~~the~~ God who has not only spared us hitherto, but provided a remedy for us. What is man at his best estate that God should be mindful of him? But oh! what is sinful man that God should visit him thus, as to lay our strayings and our iniquities on his Son, and punish him for them, that by his stripes we should be healed; which leads me to the second thing proposed, namely, to explain the second branch of the text, or our remedy by Christ.

II. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.* The Lord, that is, Jehovah, God the Father, laid on him, that is, Christ the good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep, the iniquity of us all: where the prophet obviously alludes to the well known sin-offerings or sacrifices for sin, which were appointed under the Old Testament dispensation, and were daily and annually offered in the temple for the expiation of the sins of that people; where there was a visible translation of the offence or sin, as far as possible from the offender, who brought the sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle, which was substituted or put in his room, and confessed himself over it, putting his hand on its head, which was accordingly devoted to death in the room of the offender, and accepted as an atonement for his sin, Lev. i. 4. and chap. xvi. This was eminently typical of the Lamb of God, who in the fulness of time was to expiate the sins of the world. The sheep wander and go astray from God, and the good Shepherd bears the burden

burden, their punishment, dies and suffers in their stead, that they may never feel the fatal consequences of their iniquities, which were transferred on him never to be more remembered to them; they were punished in his person, that to them there might be no condemnation, and that every offender and wanderer might claim the benefit of this great atonement. Here no exception is made in the offer of it. *The iniquity of us all.* But more particularly, let me observe, 'The Lord, that is, Jehovah, laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

1. Jehovah, your creator, your lawgiver, your judge; the God whom you have offended, whom you have wronged, whom you have wearied with your iniquities; whose just anger you have provoked, and you have cause to tremble, lest it fall upon you: this gracious God makes the first step towards a reconciliation with you, when he might have justly and easily avenged himself on you as his wilful and ingratul adversaries. But,

2. The Lord Jehovah has laid your iniquity on him, that is, upon his own eternal and well-beloved Son. He sent him upon this errand of mercy, as a proof of his willingness to have you again reconciled to him, and reduced from your fatal strayings and wanderings, Gal. iv. 4. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law." 1 John iv. 14. "God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world." And John vi. 27. "Him hath God the Father sealed." That is, He hath authorised and commissioned him to be the

the Saviour and Redeemer of lost sinners. Hence said the Lord, John x. 17, 18. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." As he sent him upon this errand of mercy, so he fitted and qualified him for it. How beautifully does the apostle describe this, Heb. x. 5, 7, 10. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He prepared a body for him, a human nature, that he might be our own kinsman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; a human nature, liable to all sorts of penal evils or punishments; to poverty and reproach, hunger and weariness, sorrow and grief, temptation from satan and the world: yea, and to death itself. Hence was he fit to suffer all those pains of body, and agonies of mind, from the hand of heaven, from men on earth, and from the powers of darkness; all that curse and death which were the due desert of our sins. This is not all, Jehovah hath given the most infallible assurance to all men, that he hath accepted of the sacrifice and atonement which his own Son made for our iniquities when they were laid on him, in that he raised him again from the dead,
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gave him an honourable discharge from the prison of the grave, Heb. xiii. 20. The God of peace hath brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and for the suffering of death crowned him with glory and honour, Heb. ii. 9. Given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess him to be Lord, to the glory of the Father, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. This is that manifold wisdom of God in a mystery, which was hid from eyes and generations, but is now made manifest by the appearance and coming of Christ. In Jehovah's laying the iniquity of us all upon Christ, sin is punished, and the sinner reconciled to God, justice is satisfied, and mercy glorified; death and a curse inflicted in vindication of God's truth; holiness and life purchased for the rebellious in pursuance of God's purpose and grace given in Christ Jesus before the world began. Here justice and judgment appear clearly to be the habitation of his throne, in his irreconcilable hatred of sin, when he spared not his own Son, and at the same time mercy and truth go before his face in all their glories and triumph, where by these sufferings he reconciles the world of sinful men to himself; which leads me to observe,

III. That every offender and wanderer may now claim the benefit of this atonement for sin; there is no exception made, but all the lost race have a free offer made of it to them. *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all;* clearly intimating

intimating the abundant sufficiency and never-failing efficacy of this one sacrifice for sin, Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Indeed, in the days of our prophet, the Jewish nation was a peculiar inclosure, to them belonged the covenants, the promise, the service of God, and the glory; and a middle wall of partition separated the heathen world from the sacred privileges which the Jews were in possession of, but the offering of the body of Jesus once for all broke down this middle wall, and tore this veil from top to bottom; the Barbarian, the Scythian, the bond and free, the Jew and the Gentile, are called now to the hope of glory by Jesus Christ, with whom there is no respect of person or nation. In this sense the apostle John tells his countrymen the Jews, 1 John ii. 1, 2. And now Christ's sons and his daughters come, at his call, to his sceptre of grace, and enlist under his banner from afar, from east, north, south, west; out of all nations, tongues, and languages; and, notwithstanding the vast numbers that reject this Saviour and salvation in every age and place

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where his gospel is preached and this propitiation set forth, yet his willing subjects who come to him in the beauty of holiness will make up a glorious assembly which no man can number, who shall stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, saying, as Rev. viii. throughout. And for all the diversity of nations out of which they come, and miseries from which they are redeemed, will harmoniously and with one voice ascribe the glory of their salvation from first to last to the free grace of God, and the precious merit of the sacrifice and blood of Jesus in the words of Rev. i. 5, 6.

Improvement. 1. Have we all like sheep gone astray? Learn your absolute need of the good Shepherd to bring you back again; if all are sickly, all have need of a Physician; enquire then, have you felt your need of him, and been imploring his kind and healing offices to recover and renew your diseased souls. Ask yourselves again, and take no rest till you can say on some good grounds, True, I am a child of wrath by nature, but I am born again by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the holy Ghost, which he hath shed abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour: True, I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but am now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul: I was once under the power and dominion of every brutal lust, and an easy prey to wander out of God's way with every wicked companion, and to follow every wicked example, but by grace have got an abhorrence of every false and wicked way,
and

and a detestation of every loose and wicked person, and have said; and will keep by it, Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God. I like to be willingly under law to Christ, and a companion to all them that fear the Lord: true; prodigal-like, I have gone far from God, and the time was when I thought myself better in any company and in any place, rather than to commune with my own heart, to place myself under his eye, and to live and act with a view to an after judgment; but I have now seen my folly, I have arisen and returned, I have mourned over my strayings at the feet of my Father in heaven, in the bitterness of my soul; I have intreated his favour with my whole heart, and a thousand times begged a room and a place in his family, on my bended knee, and that for the sake of the blood and sacrifice of his dear Son, he would forgive my former follies, and receive me again tho' it were but into the number of his hired servants, that he would keep me under his eye and restrain my former wanderings: Believe it, my good friends, our welcome at Christ's table to-day, and our everlasting joy hereafter, depends upon our being in case to say in some measure as above.

2. Have all and every one of us a corrupted bias that is ready to turn us aside into our own ways, and to betray us into the hand of every temptation that assaults us on this our weak side; learn to walk circumspectly, to watch and pray against your iniquity, to bend all your own attention and care, and all the force of grace received, and to call in fresh supplies of divine aid.

against this right-hand and right-eye sin. Beg, this day, the Captain of your salvation to teach your fingers to fight, and your hands to war more successfully in the spiritual warfare than formerly you have done against those sins which most easily beset you, that every communion may be nourishing the new nature, weakening the old man, and killing the body of sin in you.

3. Did the Lord lay the iniquities of us all upon Christ? Let us adore and bless him for this wonderful deliverance from the very worst of evils. O christians! if those iniquities had been laid on us all when they were laid upon Christ, they would have weighed us all down to the lowest hell. Just and true is the wise man's account, when he says, Fools make a mock of sin; and elsewhere, Tho' those fools may roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel, yet it will prove the poison of asps in their belly. What a dreadful burden do those angels who excel in strength, feel sin to be, who lost their first estate? Jude 6. What a terrible thing did Cain feel sin to be when he cried out, My punishment is greater than I can bear? How heavy did this weight lie upon the psalmist's mind? Psalm xxxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. xl. 12, 13. Consult your own feelings, if ever your spirits were wounded with a sense of the evil and deserved wages of sin, and you will say with the wise man, No sorrow like it; for a wounded spirit who can bear? And this day you are called to look upon sin in the most terrifying and dreadful light, as it pierced the immaculate Lamb of God through with inexpressible sorrows; when the Lord laid on him
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the iniquity of us all. When our iniquities were laid on him they procured the vailing of his glory for a season, and his appearing in the rags of our mortality. Sin made him leave his throne of glory in the heavens to be born of woman in a stable, and to lie among beasts in a manger, loaded him with reproach and poverty, and with the odious names of glutton, deceiver, traitor, and demoniac. The burden of our sins threw him into a bloody agony, and forced strong cries, and prayers, and tears, from him; fastened a heavy cross on his blessed shoulders till he fainted under the weight of it as they laid him to his crucifixion. After he had given these shoulders to the smiters to be severely scourged, and his blessed cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, our sins pierced his hands and his feet, and made him to bleed, grone, and die.

Think of this ye that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, all ye impenitent workers of iniquity, and tremble, lest the Lord lay your own iniquities which ye love and practise without remorse and fear, upon your own breasts. And do you think that your feeble hands will be strong, or your weak hearts will be able to endure if he enter into judgment with you? Is it nothing with you to rush upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, and to provoke his anger as if you were stronger than he? Are everlasting burnings a light matter in your eye? If it was so in the green tree what will become of the dry, and the stubble? For God's sake, think ere it be too late; admire his goodness that has spared you hitherto, fly from wrath to come,

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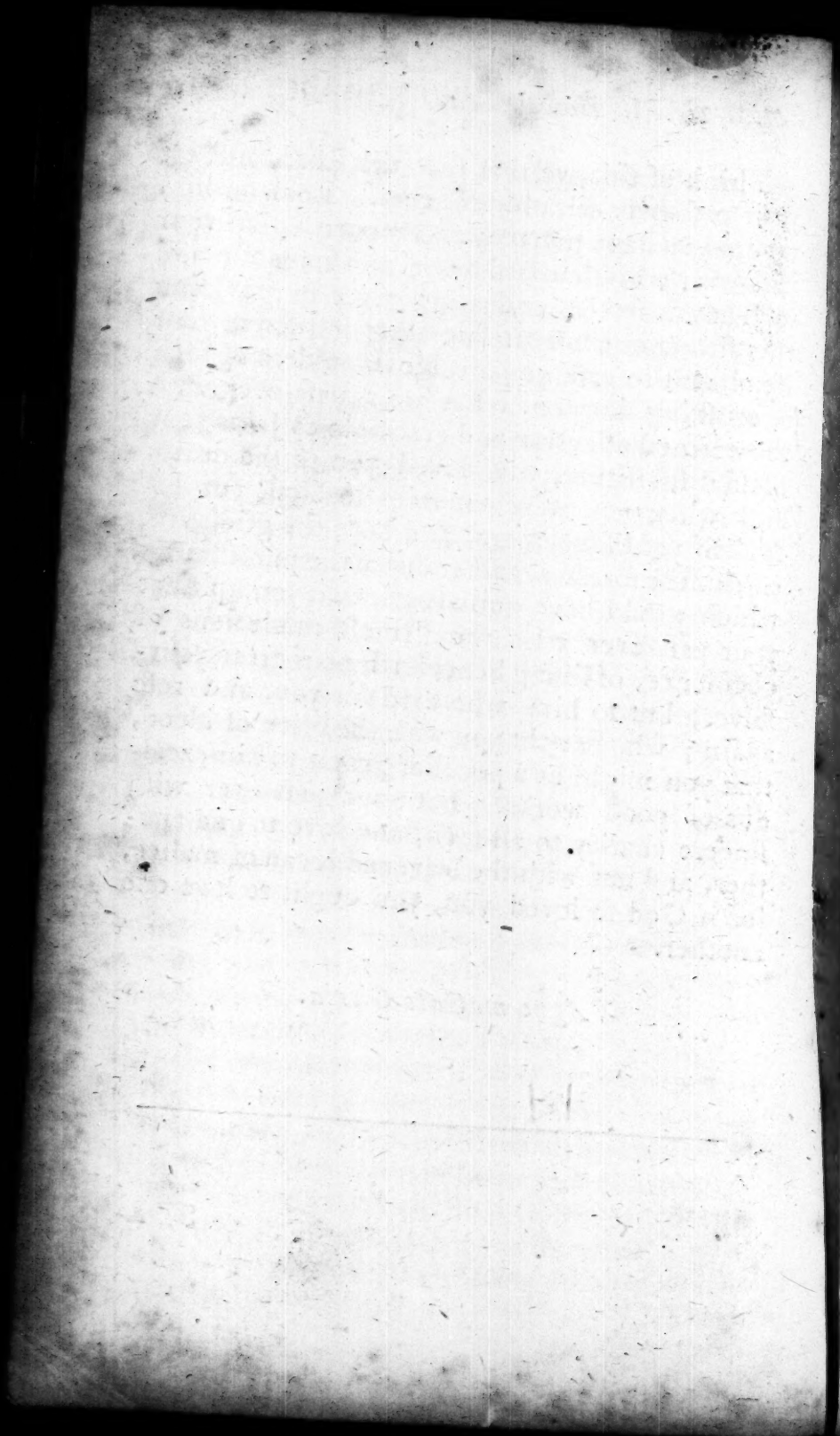
while we as ambassadors for Christ beseech you to be reconciled to God thro' the death of his Son; comply with the kind entreaty; turn, why will you die? and do it speedily, one day's continuance in your sins may put you beyond the reach of another after, and fix you to their place where the worm never dies. To-day, if you will hear his voice: this day salvation will come to your hearts and your houses. Be wise then, be instructed, join trembling with your mirth, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. Think of this, ye weary and heavy-laden, who are discouraged with fears, and terrors, and sorrows for sin that ye have done. Jehovah in laying our iniquities upon Christ, has opened a door of hope to you. How great and multiplied soever thy transgressions have been, thy case is not desperate. There is riches enow in that free grace of Jehovah which made him to lay the iniquities of us all upon his own dear Son, to spare every mourning penitent that is willing to seek the benefit of this atonement forrowing. There is merit enough in the blood of Jesus for the remission of thy many sins, and to make thee one of those who love much because much is forgiven, Luke vii. 47. Here is sovereign balm for thy bleeding, sorrowful, and terrified mind, may God apply it to thy soul by his holy Spirit, and then thy fears will be dispelled, thy sorrow eased, and thy painful and wounded mind be bound up and healed. In the mean time, hope thou in his word, and believe for thy support, that the mourner is pronounced blessed even before his comfort is sent him, Matth. v. 4.

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Think of this, ye that fear the Lord, and eat your pass-over with bitter herbs. Look on him whom you have pierced, and mourn. Eat your pass-over with thankful hearts and songs of praise to Jehovah for his endearing grace in providing this strong one to bear this heavy burden in your stead, and to ease your feeble shoulders of such a crushing burden. Eat your pass-over with the warmest affection and gratitude to Jesus your blessed substitute, who loved you to the death, and when you were enemies to God, put his soul in your souls room, and bore the griefs and carried the sorrows, and endured the punishment which would have quite swallowed you up. Eat your pass-over with the firmest resolutions of obedience, of living henceforth no more to yourselves, but to him who died for you, and rose again; who bought you with the price of blood, that you might be a peculiar people to him, zealous of good works. Eat your pass-over with sincere charity to all men, and love to one another, and not with the leavened bread of malice, for if God so loved you, you ought to love one another.

Agno mactato Gloria.

SER.



S E R M O N II.

Communion Sabbath Evening at Slains.

June 10, 1744.

2 Peter iii. 18.

Grow in Grace.

THE apostle concludes this epistle with an exhortation to the believers to whom he wrote to watch against the errors and false doctrines of seducers, lest being laid away thereby they should fall from their own steadfastness in the faith of the gospel, verse 17. and to that end, in the words of the text, he directs them to grow in grace. The apostle all along supposes them already converted, and fairly entered in at the strait gate that leads to life, but cautions them in the text against looking upon themselves as having already attained, or being already perfect, or to think that all their way to the kingdom was strewed with roses, or that they themselves were so strong as possibly in a warm frame they might apprehend themselves to be. No! as if he had said, The duties of the christian life are numerous and extensive, and it will require much faith and patience and prayer to go thro' them well; unforeseen trials and temptations and snares from satan, the world and the flesh, may

may suddenly rise up, which will fill you with fear of falling before them in the conflict, and convince you sadly of the imperfection and weakness of those graces in you which you think strongest; and therefore, as if he had said, Be not high-minded, but fear; let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; trust not to your own hearts, lean not to your former attainments, remember where your great strength lies; or in one word, and it is my parting advice, and the most important one that can be given you, Grow in grace.

Two things will be needful for explaining these words,

First, To fix the meaning of the word grace, and then,

Secondly, What is meant by growing in grace. And when I have done this, I shall make some improvement of the subject.

I. I return to the first thing proposed, namely, to fix the meaning of the word Grace: and here I may observe to you in general, that the word grace in common language signifies any free favour bestowed upon those who had no proper claim or title to that favour, but the free grant and donation of him who conferred it, and if the person upon whom the favour is bestowed, instead of favours, had justly deserved and was fairly exposed to the indignation and resentment, and severest usage at the hand of him who freely heaps them upon them; in that case grace is still the more glorious and illustrious by such a generous and gracious way of dealing. And this leads me on to observe,

2. That

2. That the scripture very appositely borrows the term Grace to represent the wonderful goodness and mercy of God to the sons of men in the whole contrivance and accomplishment of the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, when we had ruined ourselves and were so far from having the least pretence to merit or deserve the least good thing at the hand of God, that we had wilfully thrown ourselves out of his favour, and in defiance of his wrath had lift up the heel against him, and by the transgression of his law exposed ourselves justly to his fiercest indignation and resentment; and therefore this design of mercy and favour to rebel sinners is called Grace.

Jesus Christ is emphatically said to be a design to the praise of God's glorious grace, and the riches of his grace, Eph. i. 6, 7. "To the praise of his glorious grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." And this leads me,

3. To observe, for fixing the meaning of this word as it is here used by the apostle, that in scripture we find this word applied in two senses, namely, sometimes to signify a gracious act in God towards the lost race, and comes under the other names of good-will or a gracious purpose and design of his, freely to confer on fallen sinners all those saving blessings that are needful to restore them to his favour, and to prepare them for an endless happiness in his immediate presence: in this sense the word is used, Rom. xi.

5, 6. Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace, that is, according to that gracious purpose, choice or counsel of God, so Eph. i. 5, 6. But the grace of God in this sense is not capable of ebbs and flows, this foundation of the Lord stands sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his, and his purposes of grace towards them are invariable. It remains then that grace in my text be understood in the other sense that is frequently put upon it in scripture, namely, for the blessed and gracious effects that are produced in consequence of this gracious purpose of God in the souls of believers in Christ, which are called the gifts, the graces, and the callings of the holy Ghost, the fruits of the Spirit, and are held forth in scripture under the names of faith, repentance, love to God and to Christ, and to one another, peace, joy, and in one word, gospel-holiness; a list of which you have, Gal. v. 22, 23. and another, Eph. v. 8, 9. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light: for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." It is the grace of God in this last sense that produces the saving alteration and change to the better in the state and tempers of fallen sinners, whereby they are distinguished from the ungodly world, and which use from small beginnings in their first conversion, like a grain of mustard seed, to diffuse and grow up gradually, and to spread the image of God in all its beautiful lineaments through the whole temper and conversation of the renewed mind, till it come

come to the full stature of the perfect man in Christ. These things being observed for fixing the meaning of the word Grace, this will lead us easily into what is meant by growing in grace; which is plainly this, that believers in Christ ought to be daily improving and strengthening every holy disposition of soul that is in them, and advancing daily in faith and holiness. Or, to come to particulars, 1. Grow in the grace of faith, as that grace hath respect to the Mediator; it is only in and thro' the Lord Jesus Christ the blessed Mediator betwixt God and man, that a sinful creature can be brought into a state of acceptance with God, John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me." And this Redeemer will not recommend any person nor their services to his Father's acceptance, till he himself be owned by a cordial act of faith, that is, till from a thorough conviction of our own guilt and pollution, and of our own utter incapacity to recommend ourselves to God and procure our own peace, we chearfully yield ourselves to him as our Lord and our God, renouncing the dominion of every other lord and owner, and putting ourselves under his yoke, Matth. xi. 28, 29. Now is faith necessary only to our first entrance upon our first conversion to God, it is equally needful thro' the whole of our christian course; this grace is so important in itself, and of such use and efficacy towards the christian life, that the apostle Paul tells us of himself, Gal. ii. 20. "The life which I live now in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who

loved me and gave himself for me." The very same influence from Christ which is necessary at first to convey spiritual life into the soul is necessary to maintain it; the very same mediation of Christ which is necessary to recommend the sinner's person at first to God is equally necessary afterwards to recommend its person and services, Rev. viii. 3. And the more we grow in the grace of faith in the Mediator, the more vigorous will the spiritual life be in us, and we the more pleasing in the sight of God: Let us then grow in faith, that we may be still more sensible of our indigent and desperate condition without a Mediator, and of his power and readiness to help us and to recommend us to God, we may grow into a more close dependence on him, and into more firm and chearful confidence and trust in him for righteousness and strength, for the forgiveness of our sins thro' the merits of his death, and for strength and power against all our own sinful inclinations, and all the temptations of satan and the world, through the powerful grace of his Spirit, we may every day raise and increase our value and esteem of him as our advocate with the Father, and glory more and more in him, as such we may look more and more stedfastly to him as the author and finisher of our faith, and may every day grow more and more into thankful wonder and gratitude for his redeeming-love, and represent to our minds more frequently the vast extent of it to us, and to a lost world, and thereby work ourselves more and more into a steady and lively affection to him on that account, and from love be more constrained

constrained to do or suffer his will as he has revealed it in his word, or may call us out in the course of his providence. In these and a great many other instances may we all grow in the grace of faith, as it respects a Mediator. But,

2. Grow in the grace of repentance. As this grace is also necessary to our first passing from a state of enmity to God into a state of friendship with heaven; so it is equally necessary through our whole christian course, repentance for sin, and conversion to God from it are parts of the real christian's daily work, and is absolutely needful because of many sinful infirmities wherewith we are compassed, and too often needful in the best, on account even of wilful sins; and the more we are exercising and increasing in the grace of repentance, the more will we be meet for divine friendship and intercourse with the Father and the Son: I do not here mean that the grace of repentance will become more clamorous, and cause such outcries and effusion of tears, and such outward expressions of it, these may be greatest upon the sinner's first awakening convictions, when all the iniquities of his past life are set in a dreadful light before him, and the pains of hell appear to him as ready to take hold on him: but the essential ingredients of evangelical repentance may gather strength and increase daily, namely, we may grow daily into a deeper sense of the hainous evil and malignity of sin, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God, as it offends our best friend, as it pierced the Lord of glory, and grieves the holy Spirit, and is the shame, and reproach, and ruin

of our immortal souls, we may grow daily into a more confirmed hatred of it, we may every day be more careful to avoid it, and more watchful against all temptations to it from without, and all remaining inclinations to it within; in a word, more resolutions to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. than at our first setting out in the christian race. Our sorrows for sin may indeed be the more quick, our lamentations and wailings more loud, and our tears may take a greater flow than afterwards, but the very soul and spirit of repentance, if I may speak so, lies, not in the plenty of our tears, and the noise of our cryings and wailings, but in the detestation of our crimes, and the real and unfeigned aversion of our hearts to them, and in keeping ourselves from our iniquity, and in this sense we may grow daily in this grace. But,

3. Grow in the grace of love to God, to Christ, and to one another. (1) Grow in the love of God. This grace is of such importance, that Christ sums up all the first table in it, Mat. xxii. 37, 38. and is mentioned by the apostle to the Galatians, Gal. v. 22. in the very front of those fruits of the Spirit which are produced in the souls of the regenerated, and so does the apostle John, 1 John iv. 7. "Love is of God; and every one that loveth God is born of God." And indeed the love of God is undoubtedly the most free, and noble, and rational affection that human nature is capable of, and is founded upon the clearest sense of duty and interest, of gratitude and honour to the greatest, the most glorious,

ous, and the very best of Beings. But, christians, how greatly may you grow in this grace after all your yet attainments? Can you give yourselves to the study and contemplation of his transcendent perfections, his infinite power and wisdom, and goodness, and truth, and holiness; or can you survey the rich and various manifestations he has made of his great perfection in the works of creation and providence, and most of all in the works of redemption, and grace in the person and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the gospel method of salvation by him alone, and not grow into the sacred actings and expressions of love to the blessed God, such as a higher esteem and veneration of him, a sincerer and warmer desire after him, and delight in him, and a stronger and more rooted gratitude and thankfulness to him, into those lively thirstings for God the living God, those pantings, and breathings, and groanings, and even faintings for a saving interest in him through Christ, for more clear and satisfying discoveries of his loving-kindness, which is better than life, for more and more conformity and likeness to him, more intimate communion with him in all the duties of his instituted worship on earth, and more meetness for, and earnest longings for the uninterrupted and perfect enjoyment of him in heaven? Psal. xlii. 1, 2. and lxiii. 1, 2, 3. Thus grow in the grace of love to God.

(2) Grow also in the love of Jesus the Mediator. You all know, my friends, that love to the Lord Jesus Christ is so essential a part of the christian temper, that those who are destitute of

it lie under a dreadful curse, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. And have not even those who love him in sincerity whom they have not seen great cause to confess and acknowledge that with respect to this grace they have not yet attained, nor are already perfect, and are far from loving the Lord Jesus to that degree they ought? Think farther, christians, why he has instituted the holy supper which you have been partaking of this day to be a solemn memorial of his living and dying love to you, but to kindle in your hearts the spark of love to him into a more constant and steady flame. You have seen him set forth in the ordinance crucified as it were before your eyes, dying in your room and stead, dying under the imputation of your guilt, dying to give a proper satisfaction for your sins to the law and justice of God, dying that you might never die or rather agonize for ever in eternal torments, dying that you might receive the adoption of sons, and be heirs of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and shall not the love of Christ constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again? 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, and abound more than ever in the most cordial expressions of it? For instance, Shall not his honour now when he is absent lie still nearer our hearts, and shall not we pray for, and wish more earnestly the prosperity of his kingdom, and exert ourselves more vigorously as ministers, or parents, or masters of families, to promote his glory? Shall we not be more sensibly touched with grief at the dishonour done to his name by his false and pretended friends,

friends, and become more watchful over ourselves, lest we ever bring a reproach upon our profession by following the multitudes that give themselves to do evil? O communicants! be more on your guard now than ever against cursing and swearing, profanation of the Sabbath, drunkenness and uncleanness, injustice and malice, than ever you have been; make more conscience than ever of secret and family prayer, and Sabbath-sanctification, of studying the example of Christ, and copying out all those graces that shone so illustriously in his example into your own tempers and conversations, for it is in this way, he expects you to grow in love to him, John xiv. 15, &c.

(3) On this head, Grow in love to one another, this is the apostle's inference, Eph. iv. 11. and is expressly required by our blessed Lord of all who call themselves his disciples, John xiii. 34, 35. Cultivate more and more a benevolent disposition towards all your fellow-creatures, and grow daily in an abhorrence of all the malevolent passions of malice, envy, hatred, strife, which are reckoned among the works of the flesh, Gal. v. 20, 21. And the apostle John not only brings in the outward acts of impiety, cruelty, and wrong to our neighbours, as criminal in the sight of God, but even hatred, or malice, or envy in our hearts, as murder in the sight of God, 1 John iii. 15. And make it evident that you are growing in that grace of love to one another, by abounding daily in all the good offices of social life which are particularly enjoined in the gospel, as husbands and wives, parents and child-

ren, masters and servants, and such like; and especially grow in the grace of compassion and charity towards those who are in want, or distress, or affliction of any kind. Charity, my friends, as well as faith, is a part of the religion of Jesus, and tho' neither of them can be our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, they are both equally necessary in their own place; remember the words of the apostle, 1 John iii. 17. and James i. 27. And especially grow in compassion to those who are destitute in this world, and yet have all the appearances that are needful to satisfy us that they belong to the household of faith; read Matth. xxv. 31. to the end of the chapter, and we will all see cause to humble ourselves in the sight of God that we have done so little for Christ's destitute little ones, and that all of us have great room to make great improvement, and grow in the grace of charity and compassion, and love to one another. In one word, let us put on and grow daily in bowels of mercy, Col. iii. 12---18. I thought to have mentioned many other graces, namely, Humility, patience, resignation to the will of God, temperance, &c, but your time is gone, and I would think it a sort of cruelty to detain you after so long an attendance; give me leave only to close with an advice or two. And,

1. See to it, my good friends, that you are christians indeed, that you have the power of religion wrought on your hearts, the direction in the text supposes the truth of grace in the heart, that we are already converted, and I have all along supposed this, that I have been addressing myself

myself to the regenerated, at least communicants should have been concerned to make sure of this before they approached to the Lord's table; but as there are no absolute pure and unmixed communions on earth, and our Lord has told us, Many who have eaten and drunken in his presence at his table, will, another day, be disowned by him; let all of us say with the disciples, *Master, is it I?* and be duly sensible of the great importance of laying the foundation well, for if our religion does not begin with a saving change, if it be not inward and sincere, it will be like a house built upon the sand which a few storms will bring to ruin in a short time: see to it then, that a saving change has passed on you by the power of the holy Spirit, that you are new creatures, that you have a new heart, and a new spirit, for believe it, unless there be a root of grace in the heart, you cannot grow in grace, which always supposes the root of the matter in you; without this all appearances of religion you wear about you are but the shadows of religion in God's account, and can never be accepted in his sight; and this advice is the most important that all of you can attend to, whether communicants or others.

2. If you would grow in grace, attend with care and perseverance upon all the means of grace, the divine institutions of the word, prayer, the sacraments, the sanctification of the Lord's day, meditation, and such like. These divine meditations are called means of grace, because it is in a careful attendance on them that the blessed God usually confers grace at first, and afterwards makes

makes it to grow and increase. Give yourselves to the reading of the word of God, which our Lord tells us is a mean of his people's sanctification, John xvii. 17. It is a very improbable thing to expect that those will grow in grace who let their Bibles lie by them as a neglected book. Attend the preaching of the word carefully, for the ministry of the word is God's appointed mean for edifying the body of Christ, and the perfecting of the saints, Eph. iv. 11, 12; or making them to grow in grace; and I suppose, if you are christians indeed, your own experience of the blessed sacrament of the supper, its being a most strengthening and invigorating ordinance, will bring you to it as often as you can. Prayer again, as it is a duty greatly subservient to the usefulness of every other mean of grace, so I hope you will make conscience of frequent and fervent secret prayer, and of prayer in your families as well as to join in the public prayers that are put up to God in the assemblies of his people; you cannot be too sensible of your need of daily supplies from the fulness that is in Christ, for increasing your faith and your love, and every other grace, nor too often on your knees begging them from God, and be sure in all your addresses to God to have an eye to the mediation and intercession of Jesus your only advocate and propitiation, as the apostle directs, Heb. iv. 14. And finally,

3. Rouse yourselves to an endeavour to grow in grace, by looking forward to the crown of life at the end of your race. Remember the words of the apostle to the Galatians, Gal. vi. 7. "Be not

not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap, and he that soweth to the spirit shall reap everlasting life;" and you may compare that with 2 Cor. ix. 6. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully." I conclude all in the words of Jude, ver. 20, 21. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Now, unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N III.

Fast-day, appointed by the King.

Tarves, Dec. 18, 1745.

Joel ii. 17.

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach; that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

THE context shews a divine warrant for our assembling together in the courts of our God's house this day, for solemn humiliation, prayer, fasting before our God, whom we have most justly provoked by our sins to visit us with his righteous judgments. O christians, how amiable and clear is the mercy of God placed before our eyes ! God's chosen Israel had forgotten and forsaken God their Rock, they had wearied him with their iniquities, they had abused his mercies, and a general corruption and depravity of morals had diffused itself and infected the whole body of that people, from the highest to the lowest ; their kings, their princes, their nobles, their prophets, their com-
mons.

mons, were all in transgression; so almighty God threatens them with his judgments, the loss of those mercies they had long enjoyed and long abused, and in place of them, famine, sword, misery and distress of all kinds are, as it were, commissioned and levelled at their guilty heads, and ready to swallow them up; but while these instruments of death are preparing, he sends his prophet to proclaim the voice of these rods and the kind intention of him who had appointed them, namely, that he took no pleasure in their death, in their ruin and misery, but rather that they would repent and turn to the Lord, with all their hearts, with fasting and weeping, and with mourning, and rent their hearts and not their garments, and turn unto the Lord their God, with a gracious promise of relief from all their fore miseries, upon their repentance and reformation; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. And to lead up this general repentance and reformation, a solemn fast is to be appointed, and the people of all ranks, ages, and sexes, are to be gathered to the house of the Lord, as we are this day; and there the priests are to offer the sacrifices appointed by the law, for the purification of the people in the holy place, weeping as they go, burning incense, and making intercession for the worshippers without, saying, *Spare thy people, O Lord*, &c. where they are directed to fill their mouths with arguments: *O Lord, thou art the Supreme being, who art able to kill and to make alive, to pluck up and to root out nations, and*

to build and plant them. We are the clay in thy hands, thou art the potter; we cannot resist thy will; we acknowledge thy power and thy supremacy. But spare; thy mercy is thy darling attribute; thou waitest to be gracious because thou delightest in mercy, while judgment is thy strange work, O Lord, remember mercy, in the midst of deserved wrath, towards us thy people who are called by thy name, and in whom thou challegest a special propriety beyond all the other nations of the earth, who know not nor are called by thy name. This is Jeremiah's argument, Jer. xiv. 7-10. and Daniel's, Dan. ix. 19. and which the priests, the ministers of the Lord are commanded to repeat in the next period; Give not thine heritage to reproach; as if he had said, O Lord, thou gavest this land with thine own stretched-out arm to thy people, and cast the heathen out of it, that we might dwell in it, and worship thee the true and the living God here according to thy own institutions, and to witness against the idols and false gods of the nations round about, Lord, give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen (that is) the idolaters should again set up their altars to graven images in the place where thine honour dwells; suffer them not to trample the altars of the true God under their feet, and offer incense to idols where the God of heaven has been called upon, let not the heathen rule over us by driving us from the place of thy worship, by insulting and pouring contempt on the ordinances of the living God, and in triumph over us and over our holy religion, polluting thy sanctuary

with their cruel and impious sacrifices to their idols.

Why should the heathen say, Where is their God? As Israel was the envy of the heathen nations, on account of their God, and their religion, and the wonderful instances of divine favour and protection wherewith they were surrounded, and in which they placed their trust; the most shocking blasphemies against the God of Israel was the usual language of the heathen nations; witness Rabshakeh's blasphemies; and from this Moses draws an argument for Israel's being preserved, *Exod. xxxii. 12.* And good *Hezekiah, 2 Kings xix. 14, &c.* This was plainly the case in regard to the people of Israel at the time when this prophet wrote: and, christians, may not we in this land read over our case in theirs? and that, 1. In our sins and provocations, 2. In the impending judgments of Almighty God, which are in part inflicted upon us and in part hanging over our guilty heads; and, 3. In the gracious intimations of God's mercy towards us on our repentance.

I said we may read over our case in theirs in that our sins and provocations are great (in the sight of the holy Majesty in the heavens) and that among all ranks and degrees of men that are among us.

We have long enjoyed liberty, plenty, and peace, and these invaluable blessings long enjoyed and abused have brought us to Jeshurun's case, as it is fully described by Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 9, &c.* Those in the higher stations of life are to a man almost over-run with vanity, idleness, pleasure, expensive

expensive and corrupt diversions, and luxury in all its effeminate shapes: how few have escaped being infected this way, besides, that so many in high life are become atheistical and profane, and profess an open contempt of every thing sacred and good, have turned their backs upon religion and all regard to the doctrines, duties, and institutions of christianity; make the Lord's Sabbath the day of their journeyings, and contriving their worldly affairs thro' the week, or a day of intemperance; and think time ill spent in attending the public ordinances of God's worship? It is become below their politics and good taste to appear in the public assemblies of christians, join in the public prayers of God and their Redeemer, to hear a good sermon or contribute to the necessities of the poor with their fellow christians, tho' they never want to throw away upon their luxury and debauchery; and tho' we now live in an age wherein the ministers of the gospel, if ever they ought to take great heed to their lives and their doctrines, that the name of God may not be blasphemed and his holy religion brought into contempt, yet it can never be enough lamented, tho' with tears of blood, that even amongst us, who minister in holy things, some should be found inflaming needless differences about smaller things, and wasting that zeal which would be better laid out upon the weightier matters of the law; some thro' sloth and negligence, some thro' ignorance, some through handling the word deceitfully, and dropping the christian religion out of their discourses, some thro' weakness, some thro' servile compliances with the sinful humours.

and parties of the times, and to make themselves agreeable to the debauched part of the gentry, do undermine the credit and offers of their doctrine, and lay a stumbling block to the success of the gospel, in the way both of sinners and saints.

And then as to our common people, is there not an almost universal corruption and depravation of manners spread over the face of the whole land? How few families among us make conscience of the worshipping of God in them? what obscenity fills the mouth of every debauchee in low life? What cheating, treachery, envy, malice, drunkenness, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, and immorality of all kinds, and especially a spirit of lying, and disaffection to our happy constitution in church and state? These are the sins of our age, and of all ranks in it. And I am sure to an attentive observer we equal Israel of old in our sins; but then let us see,

2. How like them are we in the judgments of Almighty God that are hanging over our guilty heads, and which have in part been inflicted upon us? And on this head I shall only mention what is known to all of you. In the end of the year 1739, when we had the first late and rainy harvest, followed with the bad crop, 1740, began the first interruption of our plenty; this was followed with a declaration of war against Spain, which first interrupted our peace; and then, in an instant, scarcity of bread, or, in your own language, dear meal, and at the same time an intire stop to the sale of your manufactures, (both unknown for near thirty years together) at once scattered and beggared multitudes
of

of honest families in one year's time, and brought such a great distress upon the country as is not recovered to this day; and masters and tenants have felt and do feel the bitter fruits of that to this day. Soon after, war was declared by the king of France against us, which still kept the manufactures low, through the hazard they were exposed to by pirates, and the cost of insurances, attended with the loss of a great deal of the best blood of the nation in America, and the continent of Europe, where mourning, and misery, and distress, have been introduced into the families of the landed, the trading, and the poor of the nation, without distinction; and now, which is still more terrible, the flames of a civil war are kindled among ourselves, and threaten us with immediate and irremediable misery, bloodshed, and ruin.

This rebellion in its beginning was little heeded, nay, even contemned as a trivial affair, not worthy of being observed, till the defeat of Cope's army in East Lothian, and then indeed a spirit got up where it was least expected, as the Highland Chiefs, who are mostly papists, had joined a few Frenchmen who landed with the Son of the Pretender, very soon after Cope's defeat, the papists in this country set up their head, and our protestants who go under the name of High-flyers and Non-jurors, or Jacobites, who had been protected by the government in the quiet possession of their religion and liberty, set up the cry next against their benefactors, or the government which had protected them; and, oh

it, for the honour of my country and country-

men

men, it could not be said, that many of those who were qualified to the government and were under the most solemn oaths! Oh that it could be said none such had joined in the rebellion! but many of them, ever since, by a perfidious perjury, cryed out against the government to whom they had taken oaths, as usurpers, and what not, and took arms against them in defiance of their former sworn allegiance, since that time the French king and the king of Spain, the known disturbers of the peace of Christendom, and the declared enemies and suppressors of the protestant religion by fire and faggot, by persecution and cruelty, and treachery which they call by the name of the northern heresy, have fomented it; every one of our harbours in the northern parts have got in French forces, and French arms, and French money, and French ammunition, to encourage us to kill one another, and destroy our happy civil constitution, and extirpate our holy religion, and commit ravages, and plundering upon one another by a lawless and oppressive power, as it is at this day; and if God Almighty did not set restraining bounds to their wrath and fierceness, and send us help, this part of the country had been in a short time as miserable as even the Lothians were, tho' we are far from being so able to bear their oppressive exactions of money and the plundering of our effects. But I trust almighty God has mercy in reserve for us, and only designs this severe scourge to us as a check to our sins, and to rouse us up to and confirm us more in the love of our holy religion, our civil rights, and the

the happiness of a free and legal government, under our most gracious sovereign king George; especially, *Thirdly*, If we listen to the voice of his rod, and repent of our sins, and amend our lives; and, oh that this day of solemn fasting and humiliation may lead us to a particular mourning, every family apart, and every person apart, for our own sins, and the sins of the land, and to a particular reformation of our lives.

Our most gracious God (as in the case of Israel of old) is proclaiming himself, this day, in our hearing, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, not willing that we should perish, but by our repentance and reformation prevent our ruin; and has put it in the heart of our King to injoin our assembling together in the courts of our God's house, that the ministers of the Lord, in these united kingdoms, may in one day lead up the public mourning, and weep before the Lord, and make humble intercession in the name of Christ for the divine mercy to spare his people, magnify his own divine grace for our deliverance and protection, when the wrath and fury of our enemies is at its very utmost height. That he would not give his heritage to reproach, or suffer his holy religion and our civil liberties to be trampled under the feet of papists and Jacobites, nor in the place of the purity of his holy institutions punish us with the idolatrous mass, and all the trumpery of papists and graven images; but that for his own name and glory's sake he would humble the pride and tyranny of our foreign and domestic enemies, and maintain our civil and sacred rights to latest posterity, while sun and moon endure.

Improve-

Improvement. Let us then follow this public fast and humiliation-day, 1. With a sincere humiliation of our souls before God for our sins, every person apart, and every family apart, we have abused our gospel-light, we have abused our long continued peace and tranquillity: we have abused our civil liberty, and God is threatening us with the loss of them all at once. Now an unfeigned humiliation of our souls before God for our sins is the only way to escape his threatened judgments.

Heathen Nineveh prevented their ruin by a timely and general humiliation of themselves before God; and our most gracious God is still ready to relieve and pardon humble and contrite penitents, whether nations or particular persons.

2. Let us offer up our prayers and supplications in our families, and in secret, with the utmost importunity to the God of all mercy and consolation, our heavenly Father, in the name of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, that of his infinite mercy he would be pleased to give unto us, and to all men in the land, his holy Spirit as a spirit of grace and supplication, repentance and reformation, that the languishing state of religion may be revived, that a disinterested zeal for the protestant religion, and our happy civil constitution, may take place of sordid avarice, luxury, corruption and selfishness, which are like to render us miserable to every thing generous, religious and free, and in end ruin us, if God Almighty does not put a stop to these evils. That God himself may maintain our holy religion, and our civil properties and liberties, and transmit

transmit them to the latest posterity, while sun and moon endure, in opposition to all the secret contrivances and open efforts of France, Spain and Rome from abroad, or of papists and Non-jurors, and Jacobites at home.

Let us, while we pray for ourselves in public, in our families, or in secret, pray for our gracious sovereign King George, while others load him with their curses, and with odious names, let us aid him with our prayers, while others break through every sacred and civil tie where-with they are obliged to support him, and perfidiously and ungratefully take up arms against him; let him have our hands and our hearts, and our prayers, that his sacred person may be under a divine protection, and his counsels under a divine conduct; that his arms both by sea and land may be under a divine protection for the maintenance of all that is dear to us as we are men and christians, that under him and his, we and ours may live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. And, christians, let our poor and infatuated enemies have our pity and our prayers, as our holy religion teaches us, not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrarywise, to do good to them that hate us, Matth. v. 44. compared with 1 Pet. iii. 9.

Let us pray for their repentance and conversion, that they may be convinced of their mistakes, see their errors, and return to their allegiance to their King; and instead of seeking the ruin, study to be quiet, and study the good of their poor, bleeding, impoverished, and by their means almost ruined country. That God would
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set restraining bounds to their wrath and power, and render their designs of enslaving us to arbitrary power and popish bondage and superstition, vain and abortive, and that we may be delivered out of their hands, whose tender mercies to those they call heretics we know, and may be sure to find cruel.

Finally, 3. Let us follow our prayers and institutions and fasting with a sincere and vigorous endeavour in a dependence upon divine grace, to reform and amend our lives. Let the drunkards learn to be sober, and the unclean persons become chaste, let the liar speak the truth to his neighbour, and the prophane swearer fear an oath; let the Sabbath-breaker sanctify the Lord's day, and prayerless families and persons worship the God that made them and maintains their lot; let them I say begin to worship God in secret and with their children and servants, let the malicious hater and injurer of his neighbour, who dwells safely by him, purge his breast of the leaven of malice and envy and love his neighbour as himself. And in a word, let the language of hearts be this day; and let the reformation of our lives hereafter justify our sincerity in saying to God, It is meet we have borne chastisement, we will not offend any more; what we know not may God teach us; and wherein we have done iniquity we will do so no more. Then we may look for a restoring of our tranquillity; we may look for all the blessings promised Israel in the subsequent part of the chapter, from ver. 18-27. Nay, we may look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, even to our eternal salvation. Amen.

SERMON



Tarves, December 27, 1741.

Ephesians v. 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

IN the great goodness of the holy providence of our gracious God we are brought to the last Lord's day of another year. This year that is now almost past and gone, as it cannot be recalled by us, so has it proved fatal to many others, and to them been their last year in time: all of us have heard of some of our friends and neighbours or acquaintance carried off to the grave of silence since this year began; and who of us may survive another year is known only to him in whose hands our times wholly are; but this all the living know, that they must die; there is no discharge in that war, and it is a certain truth, that our dying comfortably, depends solely upon the right improvement of our precious time, while the God in whose hands are the life and breath of us all, is pleased to lengthen it out: we are now all of us one year nearer eternity than we were when this year began, and I believe there is none within hearing but can recollect many mis-spent days and hours of last year, that cannot be recalled. May the Lord himself set home with power upon our consciences the important and necessary exhortation of the apostle in the text, *Redeeming the time, because the*
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days are evil, which I have made choice of as a fit subject for our meditation at this season.

True indeed, in a certain sense, time cannot be redeemed; time once gone is irrecoverably lost, and all the treasures of the Indies cannot, in the strictest sense of redeeming, buy back to us one of those moments of time that are past: but in a larger or moral sense, time may be said to be redeemed, when our diligence to improve it is redoubled, when our study, care and endeavour, thro' grace, is to rescue the residue of our time out of the hands of those robbers of our precious treasure of time, namely, loose and wicked company, debaucheries of all kinds, idleness, immoderate recreations, and too much worldly business itself too; in a word, whatever earthly care or sensual pleasure, or unnecessary amusement would incroach upon the time that ought to be dedicated either to pray in secret, in the family, or in public, in meditation, in mortification of the body of death that is in us, or any other thing fitting us to answer the great end of our creation, namely, the honouring God, and being useful to our fellow-creatures in the station of life wherein God has placed us in his providence, and working out our own salvation in the season of it.

Whatever sin or vanity, recreation or indolence, divert us from attending to these things, is a robbery of our precious time; and if indulged, will in end ruin our souls, and deprive us of our crown at last. The apostle well knew the value of time, and that that may be done or neglected in a day or a year which may lay

a foundation for joy or sorrow to the boundless ages of all eternity; and observing at the same time, how prodigally many an unwary soul, whom he brands with the name of fool, wasted the precious treasure of their time, does, out of zeal for the honour of God; and the good of the souls of men, earnestly call upon all the living, to redeem, to save, and improve their time that God lengthens out to them, to their best purposes, and adds a very necessary argument to inforce his exhortation, *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Give me leave then, I. Briefly to explain a little upon the duty exhorted in the text, *Redeem the time*; and, II. To press it from the apostle's argument in the text, *Because the days are evil*; or shew the force of the argument: and I shall close with some practical improvement if there be time for it.

I. I would explain a little upon the duty exhorted. *Redeem the time*; and you may take the sense of it in the following particulars:

1. *Redeem the time*; that is, Recover thy precious treasure of time out of the hands of every thing that has hitherto possessed it, that is dishonourable to God, hurtful to thy soul, or useless and to no purpose or good account to thy eternal welfare.

Has our time run waste in a course of idleness and inactivity, and mere neglect of the duties of our general calling as christians, I mean the work of our salvation; or our particular calling, in the station of life wherein God has placed us in his holy providence: the text gives the mean-

ing to such, as our Lord beautifully expresses it in the parable, Matth. xx. 6. "Why stand ye here idle" with respect to your general calling as christians? Art thou still in a christless and unconverted state to this day, and wilt thou suffer thy days, and months, and years, to run quite out in doing nothing at all for eternity, to which thou art posting as fast as the wings of time can carry thee? Wilt thou let all thy time away without seeking after converting-grace, and securing thy interest by faith in the Son of God, and his salvation; without concerning thyself about a saving change of heart and life, and an union to Christ by repentance? To such I may address myself as the mariners did to Jonah, whom they found fast asleep when they were in danger of immediate shipwreck, "Arise, O sleeper, call upon thy God."

The day is far spent, the night is coming on when no man can work. Art thou converted already, the call in the text is to thee; Redeem the time; beware of spiritual sloth, laziness, slumbering and sleeping while the bridegroom delays his coming; will you not remember, if sailors sleep in a coast-voyage, are they not in hazard to run upon sands and rocks, and lose their treasure and their lives? If a centinel sleep in his watch-tower, may not the enemy seize his port, and enter the gate that his watching might have prevented? Are not christians soldiers under the banner of Christ? Are not your enemies many within and without, and if you grow negligent and secure, and forget to watch and pray, are they not ready to seize every unguard-
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ed hour to wound and defile, and destroy your souls, 1 Pet. v. 8. And may not one unwatchful hour give satan, the world, or your own hearts lusts an opportunity against you to do you that mischief which will administer matter for bitter repentance all your days? The same thing may be said of those who are idle and throw away their precious time in indolence and doing nothing, which should be employed in the duties of our particular callings or station in life; and the consequences of it are their being filled with poverty, contempt, and disappointment for this life, as well as having the fearful prospect another day of sharing the grievous punishment of the slothful servant, who hid his Lord's talent in a napkin when he should have been trading with it.

But, 2. If it is so dangerous a thing to suffer your time to be wasted in idleness, infinitely more ought we to redeem our time from being employed in those acts of vice whereby God is dishonoured, and our souls wronged, or the souls of others. If it be an horrid abuse of our time to pass it away in idleness and indolence; surely it is a greater abomination in the sight of the Lord, and must plunge our souls into deeper guilt, and bring on them a heavier vengeance, instead of redeeming the time, to lavish it away in all the licentious methods of riot and excess, intemperance, wantonness, and vicious company.

How much precious time is wasted prodigally by the intemperate and sensual? and what dreadful snares do they lay for themselves; who, in the language of the wise man, *tarry long at the strong drink?* and what fatal ruin do they

bring down many times upon their souls, and on their bodies, on their substance and families, and on their own reputation? Hence said the wise man, Prov. iv. 14. *Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*

No wonder tho' it is evident by every day's experience, that our precious time is not only sadly thrown away, but generally all the restraints from sin are taken off, and it enters as at a flood-gate, and overflows the whole man with impurity and guilt of all kinds, then it is the mouth is opened in cursing, fraud and deceit, and set against the heavens in blasphemous talk; then it is a door is opened to uncleanness, and strife, and contention, reviling, and every other abomination, as the psalmist paints it, Psal. 1. towards the end.

And the time that is thrown away in this manner lays in sad matter for terrible agonies and reproaches of conscience, and horror of spirit, when the poor sinner is laid on a death-bed, and has a view of the judgment-seat at hand. This then is the first thing couched in the apostles exhortation; *Redeem the time*, that is, recover it from these things.

2. Another thing included in the apostle's exhortation is, our closing with every opportunity that offers for our souls benefit, and making our best of all the seasons of grace, and the means of doing and getting good to our souls. We should read, and hear, and pray, and praise, and attend the divine institutions of our holy religion in secret, in our families, and in the house of God, as those who know eternity depends upon

upon the use we make of these advantages, that as these leave us, judgment will find us and be passed upon us, that no farther opportunities or seasons for acquainting ourselves with God, or seeking his favour thro' Christ, will be granted us after this life is ended, but as the tree falls so will it lie; therefore whatever is proposed to be done for our souls by the exercise of devotion or offices of our holy religion, should be attended to and followed after with all diligence, however men of worldly, profane, and sensual spirits may abuse or condemn such converses with God, and things invisible and eternal.

It is the command of our dear Redeemer, to enter into our closets, and redeem the time, to pray to our Father who seeth in secret; and it is given as a mark of Paul's conversion, or his being become a new creature, *Behold he prayeth*, Acts ix. 11. And happy is that soul who can find a pleasure and delight in redeeming an hour or two every day, from every worldly care, and every other corruption, to go alone where no eye seeth, no company disturbeth, then to pour out their desires, their fears, their sorrows, their requests, and their very hearts, before God, in the name of Christ, to review the state of their own souls in his sight, and think with pleasure and delight upon the care and kindness of heaven towards them since they came into the world, both in a way of providence and grace, in the words of Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. "As the God who has fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel who redeemed me from all evil," both of sin and danger; and at the same time
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with full purpose of heart, and chearful consent of soul, are enabled to yield and dedicate soul and body and all to him thro' Christ, in the humble and refined language of that same holy man, Gen: xxviii. 20, &c. to be employed in this kind of secret converse with God every day for so much of the time of it, as well as attend the appointed means of grace with the family, and in the public assemblies of God's people.

This is to redeem the time; and I may venture to add, that those who are either so lost in worldly pursuits, or sunk in idleness, or plunged in the pleasures of sin, as to be quite strangers to these devout exercises of the soul in secret, are indeed strangers to one of the richest and noblest pleasures of this life, as well as laying in for a miserable eternity at the end of it.

3. To redeem time, includes farther a concern to settle the evidences of our peace and acceptance with God through Christ, while our day of grace lasts; when we consider how short time we are to continue on this earth, and that our bodies are hastening to the dust whence they were taken, and that then the soul must return to God who gave it, to be adjudged to a state of eternal happiness or misery according to our having improved our gospel-season, for obtaining an interest in the merit and righteousness of the great Mediator between God and man, or our being still without God, and without Christ, and without hope.

The redeeming of our time no doubt chiefly lies in making our calling and election sure, or settling the evidences of our salvation in Christ
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throw ourselves at the Redeemer's feet with grief, and shame, with sorrow and self-abhorrence, for sins that we have done, and cry out Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. Have we known the power of divine grace, and of a renewing Spirit, in giving us the new-heart, and the new spirit! Are we new creatures, are old things become new! Hath God put his fear in our hearts, so as, that notwithstanding many falls and sinful imperfections, yet we can appeal to him that we do not wickedly and knowingly depart from him; and abhor the thought of breaking his bands and casting his cords from us, but are cordially willing to be under law to Christ? Can we say, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, it is our endeavour, in a dependence on the grace and strength of Christ, to have our conversation becoming the gospel; and herein to exercise ourselves in keeping consciences void of offence to God and all men? And if with all we can say that we unfeignedly love and honour all that bear the image of our heavenly Father, and can not only have good-will to all men, but also wish no ill to, but can pray for, and bless, and do good to the souls and bodies of our malicious and causeless enemies. If we are redeeming time, for settling and copying out these gospel-marks of a justified state, of peace with God, and an interest in Christ, and his salvation, into our own tempers and lives; if we can sign to these evidences of our being in Christ; we have then good ground

and his salvation. We have all long heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, how he not only took a human body for our sakes, but also resigned it to death and the grave, that he might make both safe and easy to his people. We are directed to look for the remission of sin thro' faith in his blood: he has procured a new covenant which is a covenant of life and peace to all that are within the bond of it. He did honour to the divine law and government by fulfilling all righteousness and shewing all subjection, even unto death; this he became a propitiation for his people, making his soul an offering for their sins, bearing the punishment of their sins in his own body on the tree, and he will come again and put all his faithful followers in possession of eternal glory. But then what have we that can shew or evidence our interest in this gospel Saviour and salvation, if we have been passing our time hitherto without redeeming time? For settling this important point, can we say that it is our earnest desire to be found in Christ, having his righteousness? That we believe in Christ, according to the gospel? Have we felt the misery of a natural state, of estrangement from God? Have we been pricked at the heart and been made weary and heavy-laden with the burden of sin, so as to count all things but loss and dung that we might win Christ, and be found in him, clothed with his righteousness? Hath that enmity, which is in our fallen and corrupted nature, to the holiness and government of God been slain and taken away by the Redeemer's cross, so as that we have been made to throw

ground to hope that our time of trial has been redeemed to the best purposes, and that our time will end in the approbation of infinite mercy and goodness, through Christ, namely, Well done, good and faithful servants; and our names shall be confessed by the great Judge of the quick and the dead at last, so as to remain glorious and honourable for ever.

I should next proceed to the second thing proposed, namely, to illustrate the force of the apostle's argument wherewith he inforceth the exhortation, namely, *Because the days are evil*, but shall leave it to be the subject of another discourse.

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

Tarves, January 3, 1742.

Epheſians v. 16.

---Because the days are evil.

I NOW proceed to illustrate the force of the apostle's argument wherewith he inforceth the exhortation in the text, *Because the days are evil*, what may be understood to comprise in it three things, which in the language of scripture come under the name of Evil :

1. The days are evil ; that is, Our time in this life is filled up with many troublesome and grievous things, which are become the natural and inevitable attendants of our short and uncertain abode in this frail and sinful state.

It was with a particular view to the vanities, uneasiness and vexations, and afflictive intanglements that fill up our days in life, that Jacob made so just as well as elegant an account of his days to Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. 9. *And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the days of the years of my life*
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been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. The same thing is intimated, Job xiv. 1. *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.*

2. Our days may be said to be evil, when our lot falls in uncommonly perilous times; that is, When natural evils in the righteous judgment and holy providence of God are inflicted on the sons of men, and rage and spread peculiar desolation, misery and distress, far and near, over and above the common and ordinary troubles and evils which we are naturally born to. Such, doubtless, were the days of the apostles and primitive christians, when the powers of the world raged against the doctrines and disciples of Christ, and were permitted to make dreadful havoc by all the methods of malicious and cruel persecution of the saints and innocents of Jesus; or, though we are not exposed to terrors and death for righteousness' sake, it is called an evil day in scripture, and eminently so, when the immediate judgments of God are abroad in the earth, Ezek. v. 16, 17. Psal. xxxvii. 19.

3. Our days may be said to be evil, when in our times, sin or moral evil, which gives high displeasure to that holy God who made us, and cannot look upon sin without abhorrence and detestation, break over all the hedges and fences which God has placed to restrain them, and overspread a whole land, infecting all ranks and degrees of men in it, and which provoke God to increase every ordinary and extraordinary natural evil, as Moses confesseth, Psalm xc. 7, 8.

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We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

A sentence or two upon each of these will throw some light on the force of the apostle's argument, how much it is our duty to redeem time for our souls eternal welfare. Because the days of our abode in life are so full of trouble and evil, that we are of all the creatures of God the most miserable, if we have no better hope or inheritance than the most advantageous worldly condition that this earth and our state on it afford. I return then,

1. To consider our days as evil in the first view proposed, namely, as our days are filled up with many vain, and afflictive, and troublesom incidents, as the natural and necessary attendants of our frail and sinful condition in this world. In this world every man is born to unavoidable trouble, and every one, high and low, rich and poor, righteous and wicked, the wise man and the fool, must stoop down and take up his share of the common evils and burdens of life.

How many pains and distempers are our bodies subjected to? How many stupid, inactive hours do they occasion to us? How many violent appetites, inflamed passions, and wild imaginations are we liable to be confounded with, hurried, exposed, and disturbed with them in this embodied state; and are our minds our better part, more secure from the natural evils of life than our bodies? No; tho' one should labour with all

his might to attain and maintain thro' grace an easy and religious possession of his own soul, yet how hard to do it amidst the bitter envyings and open strifes of some, deep malice and hatred of others, reproaches, wrathful and angry words of others, the false pretensions of friendship on one side, or the fickleness and inconstancy of others, or the unavoidable separation of the dearest intimates, even where there are the dearest and most sealed affections, the many hands of enemies that are lifted up against us, or the secret snares of treachery, and innumerable other evils tofs and torment people, and wound the soul almost every day.

And to add no more on this head, Are those things, whereon depends much of the small comfort in life that we can propose, any surer? No. Every comfort of life may be lost, estates, houses, relations, yea, and even the necessaries for subsisting ourselves and families are perishing things, and these losses may be so aggravated as to be worse than death; rapine, violence, the unjust sentence of a judge, fire, or sword, may reduce the best provided for this life, to the state of a beggar, and a small indisposition that touches the brain, may reduce the best furnished mind with useful knowledge to the state of a child or an idiot.

And is not this account of things a strong argument for redeeming our time for better purposes than the pursuit of any one thing that this world can afford us, or in the apostle's stile, in the preceeding verse, are they not the wise who choose to meddle as little as possible with the
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the vanity or intanglements of life, and withdraw from a scene of so much misery, uncertainty, and vexation at best, in the language of the psalmist, Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

3. Our days may be said to be evil when our lot falls in uncommonly perilous times, that is, when natural evils in the holy providence of God are inflicted on the sons of men, and spread peculiar desolation and misery far and near, beyond the common evils that are always unavoidable.

Such possibly were the days wherein the apostle and these primitive christians to whom he wrote lived, when every day brought alarms of terror and death to all who professed the name of Christ, and God left the lives of his servants at the mercy of every cruel and outrageous persecutor: yet notwithstanding, in the great goodness of God and the indulgence and protection of the present government, this is not our case; yet in the uncertainty of human affairs, none of us can be sure, that we shall escape a fiery trial, even in our day: and if ever God should suffer one of the tyrannical princes of France, full of the bigotry of Rome, to possess the throne of these kingdoms, (which may be of his infinite mercy always prevent) then we shall know that sort of persons, when they kill us for our supposed heresy, when they spoil us of our substance, our liberties, and all that is dear to us as men or christians; they think in so doing they do God good service.

Even in the best days in this world, an ingenuous fidelity to God and our duty, will lay us open now and then, at least, to a trial of cruel

mockings and reproaches, when enemies are restrained from doing more; and many times too we shall be obliged by our sentiments to go against the advice and importunity of friends, and to differ in matters of practice and faith from many wise and good men whom we highly esteem and value: or else wound the peace of our own minds, and weaken our confidence towards God, which ought to be a dearer and more tender concern to us than the loss of the whole world besides.

And does not the view of the evil of our days mightily enforce the practice of the apostle's exhortation, to redeem time while it lasts; to contemplate the perfections and providence of the great Author of our being; to cultivate a sound and strong faith in the Son of God, who came to deliver us from wrath to come, and to apply it to all the purposes of warm devotion; the humblest resignation to the divine will? Let us delight in righteousness and purity of heart and life, and faithfulness till the last moment of our lives, that so an abundant entrance may be ministered to us, to bring us to that quiet habitation, those realms of love and peace, harmony and charity, that eternal rest that remains for the people of God.

The time would fail me to add to this the evils of our days that very few have escaped to see, evidently arising from the righteous judgments of God that have been abroad in the earth by means of famine and the sword, whereby many families have been ruined and scattered, and gone a begging their bread, after suffering the

the hardest pinches of want and hunger at home; and are these days for us to be wasted in a forgetfulness of God and the concerns of eternity? Does not this powerfully persuade us to redeem time, to prepare for that happy state? one description of which is, *a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,* Rev. vii. 9, 14, 15, 16, 17.

3. The days may be called evil, when sin or moral evil breaks over all the hedges and fences which God has set to restrain and bridle it in, and overflows a whole land, infecting all ranks and degrees of men in it. Thus our Lord paints the evil of those days as awful presages, first, of the ruin of the Jewish state and nation, and then of the whole world's being destroyed by fire at last, described, Matth. xxiv. Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold, and then cometh such desolations that if those days were not shortened, no flesh should be saved;

ed; but for the elects sake those days shall be shortened. Whether something of this kind be not too much the characteristic of these days wherein our lot has fallen, may be gathered from every one's observation, from the general complaints of justice and truth, honesty and public spiritedness being fallen too low both in our streets and in our courts of judicature, both civil and ecclesiastical, from the open and avowed infidelity and immorality of all kinds that have infected too many of all ranks among us, in defiance of all the clearest evidences of the truth of our holy religion, and the purity and perfection of its precepts. Are not avarice, luxury, profane swearing in common conversation, a bold contempt of God's word, and all the institutions of our holy religion, a subversion of truth and right, a general prostitution of conscience, the poison of atheism and deism, a scorn of religion and all regard to God, and a depravity of morals, come to a great height in the licentious age wherein we live? And if a timely repentance and reformation do not prevent it, what have we to look for but that as kingdoms and states can only receive their rewards and punishments of the Almighty Governor of the world in this life, because as such they exist not in another, so as it has fared with other nations, the Jews particularly.

We must lay our account to undergo many adversities, and that sin will in some degree be found a blotting reproach and a periodical ruin to us in our turn, as it has been to other nations before us. In a word, misery and ruin,
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in all their frightful shapes, are in truth the natural consequences of a contempt of God and religion, and against dissolution of manners, as well as the righteous retribution of the divine government, the righteous judge of all the earth; for whom it is as equally just not to suffer the workers of iniquity to pass unpunished, as it is not to suffer the righteous to miss their reward of grace: and how forcible is the apostle's argument in the last view of the evil of our days to recommend his exhortation of redeeming time to the good purposes of taking heed, watching and praying that we enter not into temptation, and imploring the aids of the grace and intercession of our Redeemer, to preserve us from the evils of the world while we are in it, and from the infection of vice, and the sins of others, that we may not partake of their plagues, nor be suffered to follow a multitude to do evil. Let each of us, for ourselves and for our families, resolve and put in practice, that, whatever others do, we and our house will serve the Lord, and be intitled to these gracious promises: Psal. xci. 14, 15, 16. *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.*

Upon the whole, as many threatening evils of a natural and moral kind are abroad in the world to alarm us all to redeem time; let not any soul among us provoke the great Lord of
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the vineyard, after all his patience and goodness with us, to say of us as in Luke xiii. 7. *Behold, these three years, I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

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S E R M O N VI.

Tarves, December 28, 1746.

Exodus xxiii. 2.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

IN the good and kind providence of our most gracious God we are now brought in peace and safety to the last Sabbath of another year, while many of our countrymen have been overwhelmed by those miseries, and calamities, and deaths, which have filled every corner of the land in the course of the late rebellion, and by the hand of public justice since it was happily extinguished. May God Almighty give us all grace to be duly thankful to him, who is our life and the length of our days, for his gracious protection of us and ours in the midst of so many dangers, and enable us to order our conversations for the remaining part of our time in this world more than ever according to those rules of conduct which he has enjoined in his holy word, and particularly that in my text, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

And in discoursing a little from it, I shall endeavour in a dependence on 'divine aid,

First,

First, To explain the meaning of this rule.

Secondly, Inforce it, or press the observance of it by some arguments.

Thirdly, Conclude with some practical reflections. I return to the first of these, namely,

I. 'To explain this rule, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*. Three things are obviously included here.

1. That whatever is in itself sinful, or appears so to us must be avoided, tho' we go against ever so great a multitude in our conduct. Moses in the context enumerates not a few of these evils or sinful things which we must avoid tho' all the world besides should practise them, such as, lying, and especially that sort of malicious lying which consists in railing and spreading false reports to the prejudice of our neighbour, joining with perjured persons, unrighteously wresting judgment in courts of judicature, laying more stress upon some circumstances that may move pity than upon the stated rules and measures of justice, taking of bribes, oppressing strangers, the poor and such like: from ver. 1--10. In which things Moses commanded the Israelites not to follow a multitude in the context, and the very same holds equally in regard to all other transgressions of the same laws. We may add, Thou shalt not blaspheme the name of God by prophane and customary cursing and swearing; thou shalt not despise his worship, nor pollute his Sabbaths; thou shalt not kill, nor steal, nor commit adultery, or covet what belongs to thy neighbour, thou shalt not be an undutiful child to thy natural parents, nor yet a rebellious subject
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to thy civil parents, however general or prevailing such sins may be.

Thus a multitude should not draw us so much as to a single transgression of the divine law, far less to a continued course of such immoralities. What the apostle says to them who lived among idolaters may be applied with the same justness and propriety to all such as live among those who are lovers and workers of any iniquity, 2 Cor. vi. 17. *Come out from among them and be ye separate.* And the reason is clear like a sun-beam, because we owe more to the authority of God Almighty our supreme lawgiver and judge, than to all the world besides; when therefore we see any command of God violated, disregarded and trampled upon, we are by no means to run with a crowd that do so, or take measures from a number of transgressors, because if we partake with them in their sins and transgressions we must lay our account to share with them in their plagues and miseries which God hath threatened to inflict upon all the transgressors of his holy and just laws.

2. In these sinful cases where a man is directed not to follow a multitude, he stands obliged to observe this direction against all considerations whatsoever. Common fame, worldly profit, gratification of flesh and blood in ease and pleasure, must all be renounced rather than fall in with the vices and corruptions of any age or set of men. Blasted to death at last will that character be that is raised upon the ruins of religion and virtue. Moth and rust, and the curse of heaven will eat up those riches that are gotten by

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sinful means; and he that seeketh his ease or even his life at the expence of his virtue shall be shaken out of both terribly, and be sent to hell for ever, where vice and iniquity are general and epidemical; the temptations to it are so frequent, various, and on all hands repeated, that it requires much watching, prayer and self-denial, to keep one's garments clean, but it will never justify our iniquity to plead that it is the sin of a multitude as well as ours.

Farther, the great wealth and high stations of evil-doers should not give them any power over us; but even against these, a truly good man will stand his ground; he will not be awed by their state and grandeur, nor frightened by their frowns, nor be bribed and seduced by their courtesies, flatteries or favours, to approve or imitate their sins. Farther, no consideration of acquaintance, intimacy, nor blood relation should prevail upon us to do an ill thing.

3. When we are required not to follow a multitude to do evil, it implies that we should never follow their example. 1. We must not hearken to the counsels of the wicked, though numerous, or great, or near to us, Rev. i. 10. When with fair speeches and cunning insinuations they would draw us into ways not good, *my son, walk not with them.* 2. We should be yet more constantly watchful against the ill influence of their examples; when the counsels of sinners are once rejected with sincerity and resolution, we may perhaps be no more assaulted in that way; but example is an abiding unwearyed sort of solicitation, and has a strange power
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over us, as it draws by imperceptible degrees; and therefore it will call for our continual care, and require a double zeal for our duty to withstand a multitude of evil examples. I have particularly hinted on these two, because the ruin of not a few of our acquaintance has been brought about under our observation since this year began.

II. I now inforce the rule, and press the observation by some arguments:

1. The sins of a multitude will not excuse yours; it cannot render our disobeying any command of God inexcusable, to say that we were encouraged to it by a world of precedents; for however the greatest crimes may be pardoned by our dear Redeemer, yet the least sin cannot make a plea for itself, upon its being recommended by millions of examples. We may take this for a certain maxim, that nothing can excuse what is sinful and vicious; sinners may lose their sense of the evil and odiousness of sin, by its becoming very common and familiar, but sin does not lose its nature, nor does the law of God lose its force and truth, or any of its threatenings upon that account, Matth. xxiv. 25. and we are farther warned that if we sin with a multitude, we must suffer with them, Ps. ix. 17. Ezek. i. throughout.

2. The punishment of a multitude will not lessen ours. It will be no comfort in hell to find a multitude there as miserable as ourselves. To hear thousands of thousands roling and crying out, under the same anguish, will no more relieve our pain, than it would be an ease to a com-

pany of persons racked with the most violent distempers to be within hearing of one anothers groans, and cries, and complaints. Nay, it will but aggravate it by your charging one anothers ruin upon each other, and aggravating such charges by cursing the day of your acquaintance, and the times when ye drew one another to sin.

3. It may perhaps farther prevail with you to set the examples of those who have done well against the examples of a multitude of evil doers. Think of such as have been remarkable for their goodness in the worst of places, and in the most degenerate times; there is something so great and attractive in these instances, that if you attend to them they will raise an emulation in you, Enoch, in the first age, Gen. v. 24. and Heb. ii. 5. and Noah, Gen. vi. 9. so Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 8. Joshua, chap. xxiv. Elijah stood up for God when none durst publicly own him, after the idolatrous king of Israel had slain the Lord's prophets and set up idols, Dan. vi. 10. Thus some good men. Let us now argue with ourselves, if we lived in such a world or city, or times, as those who stood alone, how much more would religion be countenanced, the danger of our enemies broken, &c.

4. The honour and happiness of such as have distinguished themselves. Enoch lived no common life, and he had no common death, but was carried over that pit into which other mortals fall by the hand of God. Noah was preserved. Angels were sent to deliver Lot, Gen. xix. 22. Joshua brought Israel victoriously into Canaan. Elijah was translated. Daniel was preserved by an
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angel from the lions. What honourable mention is made of *a few names in Sardis*? Rev. iii. 4. Moses rose to a greater glory than Pharaoh.

God does in a particular manner observe and esteem, and one way or another will honour that piety which appears in ill places. I am verily persuaded, that none ever set themselves to seek and serve God in wicked and profane families, but they have been owned and blessed in an extraordinary manner. All wise and good men will be sure to set a high value upon such wherever they hear of them. Singular piety commands the respect of those who decline the practice of it.

5. Such piety shall be amply rewarded in another life. Ah, the awful thought to see the debauchees of all denominations, Rev. vi. and the faithful that have come out of all these many tribulations for their very goodness' sake, Rev. vii. Luke xxii. 29. Let us but act as we shall wish to have done when time is at an end, and then we shall be effectually engaged not to follow a multitude of evil doers.

Inferences. 1. From hence we may take one necessary part of the character of a christian. He is like his great Master, separate from sinners. He is one that has a mind too great to be born down by the common way of talking: shall we live like others, and just do as others about us do, right or wrong? No; the truly good man will venture to say with a resolute mind, I dare not live and act like others that do evil, be they ever so numerous or near me; in things that are

sinful, will not, I must not follow a multitude to do evil. If others swear, lie, break the Sabbath, are unclean, are knaves, steal, get drunk, that can never excuse me to do so. *Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.*

2. This should engage each of us not to be followers of a multitude in that which is evil; where this is the case of any, the best thing they can do is to repent of their folly, and to break off from their evil company. This may be hard at first, but there will be comfort and satisfaction afterward which will make a sufficient amends. Forsake the way of the foolish, Prov. ix. 4, 5. Your life is at stake, and all that is dear to you, and that is uncertain, even of being possessed one day.

Think how shocking a sight it would be, if on a death-bed they should come about you, saying, It was with you we were wont to get drunk, &c.

3. It is a sin to be ashamed or afraid of such a singularity. I do acknowledge myself an utter enemy to affectation; and where persons make themselves singular without very good reasons for their doing so, they should be handled with some severity: but every wise man will weigh it. Shall I be a swearer, because it is common in the place where I live? Or shall I be afraid or ashamed of singular goodness, to pray in secret, in my family, to set a good example before my children, &c. because few others do it? Shall we be ashamed of that which is our glory? Shall we be ashamed to leave others in that which is
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their shame and disgrace. It was a very wise and handsom reproof of one who seeing his friend look out from an ill place, watching an opportunity to slip away undiscovered, called out to him, Come away, you need not be ashamed to leave it, but you should have been ashamed to go into it.

I close all with an address, 1. To parents; how careful ought you to be to keep your children from the corrupt and infectious company of evil doers? You have heard how necessary this is for their good here and hereafter, and therefore remember the dreadful charge brought against Eli on this account, and his punishment, 2 Sam. iii. 13. *He restrained them not.* Endeavour to keep yourselves free from this charge. For this end begin early to instruct their tender minds by informing them of the happiness that will be the portion of the upright, and the misery that will attend those who follow the example of the wicked: endeavour to form in them an abhorrence of these sins, namely, swearing, lying, Sabbath-breaking, rebellion against parents, &c. Their minds are very capable of feeling the force of what you say of the odiousness of these things.

By making your own company as agreeable to them as possible, you will powerfully wean their minds from wicked companions, therein shewing them the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. Do not lay them under too rigorous restraints, but allow them proper innocent amusements. If you see them form acquaintance, and like and imitate the vicious, which would

would corrupt them, warn them, and by gentle methods draw them off; yea, reason with them upon the dangers and terrible instances of those who have followed the examples of evil doers; and if all will not do, interpose the authority which God has given you, absolutely forbid them, and let them see that you are in earnest. At the same time recommend religion to them in the most amiable light, a love to the ways and people of God. Pray for them, and pray with them, and see them pray with their infant tongues; be regular in your own behaviour and examples; often call them to an account, Sabbath evenings especially. This would prevent the ruin of multitudes, and the want of this is a principal cause of the prevailing evils with which the land abounds.

2. To children or young people, uncorrupted and of religious parents. Be thankful to God for your advantageous circumstances. Keep a strict watch over yourselves on the slippery stage of youth; watch against evil company; awe yourselves ever with a sense of the eye of God upon you. How shameful on your part, and how grievous to your parents, if they live, or to others who were acquainted with them, if you degenerate from them? Let these considerations and arguments prevail upon you not to imitate the examples of evil doers.

3. To the children of religious parents who have forsaken God. Be persuaded seriously to think on the evil and dangerous consequences you lie under, the aggravation of your guilt, the contempt you cast upon the privileges of
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your religion, the violation of your baptismal vows, grieving the holy Spirit, and making sad the hearts of your parents, that the end of these things will be bitter sorrows now, and endless miseries hereafter. If you are resolved to alter your course, conclude not your case desperate; but put away every known sin by a thorough repentance, and by turning unto God with your whole heart.

SERMON

1492

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S E R M O N VII.

*Preached at Ellon, at the moderation of a call
to a minister.*

March 6, 1745.

Pfalm lxxxiv. 1.

*How amiable are thy tabernacles, - O Lord
of hosts!*

I Shall not spend any time in an enquiry after the composer, first occasion or design of this psalm, but just observe, that the psalmist seems to have been in a state of exile when he penned it; some think it was when he was forced to leave his capital on occasion of the unnatural rebellion of his son Absalom: whatever be in that, he casts an eye back upon Jerusalem the city of Zion's solemnities, where the God of heaven was publicly worshipped on mount Moriah, the place where the tabernacle was now fixed, and where the temple was afterwards built by his son Solomon; and meditating on his past freedom of access to this place of solemn worship, and on his present restraint from approaching the tabernacles of God, he breaks forth into this warm expression, *How amiable*
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are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. When the psalmist vents the warm devotion of his heart in the words of my text, we are not to imagine that he confines the epithet of *amiable* to the outward splendor of the tabernacle-worship, though indeed every thing was appointed to be resplendent and striking even to the outward appearance in the public worship under that dispensation, as we read, Exod. xxvi. xxvii. and xxviii chapters; yet it was something infinitely more amiable than this pompous show and ceremony, splendid as it was, that attracted the admiration and esteem of this good man, and made him to be so uneasy under his confinement from the public worship of God. His soul longed for the living God, the perfection of beauty; he considered the institutions of public worship as means of drawing nigh to God, as having his promise annexed to them, that in all places where his name is recorded, he will come unto them who sincerely worship him, and bless them, Exod. xx. 24. He had such experience of the happy effects of his joining in the public praises of God, and in the public prayers and supplications in warming his heart with love to God, and fixing on it the strongest impressions of gratitude to God, of raising and increasing every pious sentiment, and cherishing and keeping alive the life of God in his soul; he found vast advantage in having the reasonable and holy laws of God publicly read, and took delight in the typical and ceremonial part of the
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tabernacle-worship as shadows of good things to come, as standing memorials of the placability of the divine nature, and pledges of the faithfulness of God, that the promises made to the fathers concerning the Messiah should all in the fulness of time have their accomplishment. And when he viewed the institutions of public worship in this light, he cries out, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*

What the psalmist says here of the public worship of God under the Old Testament may, I think, with great justice be applied to the institutions of public worship under the New: and the design of this discourse shall be, in a dependence on divine assistance,

First, To enumerate the several parts of public worship appointed under the gospel; and,

Secondly, To show how justly the epithet in the text may be applied to each of them; and,

Thirdly, Conclude the whole with an inference or two.

I. I return to the first thing proposed, namely, To enumerate the several parts of public worship instituted under the gospel.

1. I begin with Praise; whereby, under an actual sense of the presence of God, christians when they are assembled together celebrate the glorious perfections of the divine nature, and present their joint thanksgiving to God for all his mercies, in the name of Christ, expressing their inward sense of the perfections of God, and bringing to remembrance the particular reasons upon which their thankfulness is founded, in order to raise their gratitude to their great Bene-
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factor, and excite one another to testify it sincerely in the practice of every thing which is well-pleasing in his sight.

This is a part of public worship in common to the Old Testament and to the New ; hence we read that under the Old Testament dispensation, they entered the gates and courts of God with praise and thanksgiving to God, Psal. c. 4. and in the New Testament, they continued with one accord, publicly praising God, Acts xxvii. 47.

2. Another part of public worship instituted under the gospel is Prayer ; which is the voice of dependence and of misery ; that is, the call of a being that feels itself indigent and insufficient of itself to be happy, and subject to many miseries, and liable to more. I say it is the call of such a being for help, and deliverance, and protection from Almighty God ; and its calling upon him is at the same time an open acknowledgement of his unbounded and inexhaustible fulness, goodness and mercy.

Our wants, our weaknesses, our transgressions, our miseries that we feel at present, and to which we are liable, are innumerable : hence the Old and New Testament saints have made it a part of their public devotions, to spread their joint wants and miseries, to confess their common sins, to unite their humiliations, confessions, and supplications, and send them up to Almighty God their common Parent, the Hearer of prayer, in the name of their common Shield and Messiah, as the psalmist expresseth it, ver. 8, 9. of this psalm ; or in the clearer language of the New Testament, of our common advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, 1 John ii. 2.

3. Another part of public worship is Preaching and Hearing the word of God; for which end an order of men are consecrated and set apart to the study of the works and revealed word of God, with a view to impart to christians, when they are assembled, every Lord's day, or on other occasions, the most useful and important instructions, for informing their understandings and regulating their practice; to publish and declare the whole counsel of God, for the salvation of men, or the whole gospel of Christ, as comprising in it not only all and sundry the doctrines and duties of natural religion, but also the whole of that revelation which God hath at sundry times and in divers manners made known in times past by the prophets, and in these latter days by his own Son and his apostles; of what is needful to be believed and practised in order to eternal salvation, Rom. x. 14. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they are sent?*

4. The administration of baptism and the Lord's supper is also a part of the public worship of God under the gospel; the institution of baptism is in Matthew, chap. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost;* and the design of it is to be the federal initiating rite of entering upon the pro-

session of the christian religion, intitling us to the known privileges, and binding us to the known duties and obligations which belong to his professed disciples. And the administration of the Lord's supper is a thankful memorial of our Redeemer's dying love, which he instituted that night wherein he was betrayed, to be a standing ordinance in his church till he come again: a large and particular account of which the apostle gives us, 1 Cor. xi. 24. to the end of the chapter.

The last thing I mention as a part of the public worship of God under the gospel is that of contributing. as God hath prospered every one, for the relief of our distressed brethren, and especially the poor that belong to the society or congregation where we are assembled together, which is founded upon the apostolic practice in their worshipping assemblies, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. and may be justly called a part of the public worship of God after the apostle, Heb xiii. 16. *For with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.*

Having now enumerated the several parts of instituted worship in public under the gospel, I now proceed to the second general head, viz.

II. To apply the epithet in the text to each of them, *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!* or, *How amiable are the institutions of public worship under the gospel-dispensation!* And when we apply this epithet, *how amiable*, to the ordinances of God's public worship, it must include two things:

1. That there is a natural fitness in them as becoming the known perfections of God, and
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the relation we stand in to him as rational and accountable creatures, and the duty we owe him as such. And this will be very evident in regard to the several parts of public worship now enumerated. That creatures who are made capable of taking in (at least in some measure) a sense of the infinite knowledge and wisdom of the eternal power of the supreme authority and omnipotence of their Creator, their Governor and their Judge, who receive daily and are maintained in the possession of every good thing from his bounty and goodness, namely, an air to breathe in, an earth to tread on, rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; wisdom and understanding beyond the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven. For creatures, I say, thus made, and thus related, and thus obliged to assemble together, to speak forth and express their esteem and admiration of the perfections of God, their great Benefactor; to offer him their joint tribute of praise and thanksgiving, in order to excite and increase their gratitude to him, seems evidently founded on, and to be a branch of the law of our creation; but then surely the argument gathers strength when to this we add the powerful considerations wherewith it is enforced by the revelation of God, namely, that this all-sufficient and self-sufficient Being, who stood in no need of us, has made himself known, as reconciling apostate and ingrateful creatures to himself by the death of his own Son, declaring his great name to be *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.*

How fit a thing is it that we assemble, weekly:

at least, in the most public manner, to ascribe in the most grateful strains, salvation, glory and majesty to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, who has loved us and ransomed us from a vile and hopeless captivity, to be kings and priests to our God and our Father; especially when we reflect that millions of our fellow creatures are involved in the thickest darkness and delusions, falling down before the works of their own hands, and invoking even the powers of hell with most detestible and cruel ceremonies, instead of adoring and praising the only living and true God, thro' the mediation of Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

But then as to public prayers again; that creatures to their own feeling and experience are compassed about with so many imperfections and failings, and wilful transgressions, should humble themselves before the pure majesty whom they have offended, and to whom they are accountable, to join together in confessing their common sins; that is, the wilful thoughts of their minds that have been disagreeable to the holy nature and precepts of God; the words of their mouths and their outward actions that have been offensive to God, their neighbour or their own happiness, and join their united supplications for his mercy and pity. That creatures who feel themselves absolutely dependent and insufficient to their own safety and welfare, exposed to infinite dangers and evils which they can neither foresee nor prevent, should assemble together to spread their wants before the eyes of the unbounded goodness and infinite fulness,
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and implore his aids. That creatures who are members one of another, that is, of the whole society of mankind, from a sympathy and love to their whole kind, should jointly implore the mercy of God to others that are in misery and distress of any kind, seems all to be founded in the law of our creation, and most consonant and agreeable to the reason of our own minds; but then how happily does the revelation of God come in here to strengthen all these natural obligations, and at the same time to ascertain us of the appointment of heaven, to assemble together, weekly at least, for these purposes, as well as to lay a sure foundation of sufficient comfort to sinners to draw nigh to God, and relieve us of an anxious and endless solicitude about the means of appeasing the Deity (where the light of nature absolutely fails us) in that we have our great high Priest over the house of God, Jesus the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens, ready to present the person and prayers of every sincere soul that comes to God by him, for mercy and grace to help him in every time of need; and has promised us, that whatever we join together in asking on earth, for ourselves or others, in his name, that is agreeable to the will of God, shall be conferred on us. But farther,

As to the preaching and hearing the word of God; the natural fitness and reason of this moved the old sages of the heathen world to open schools of philosophy, and to read lectures on *morality*, in public assemblies, not only for the benefit of the grossly ignorant and avowedly wicked and profane, but also to keep alive the impressions

impressions of virtue upon the minds of the knowing, the wise and the good, who are too apt to die away by the hurry of this world's business and the violence of its temptations.

But then how much superior fitness does the revelation of God show in the divine institution of a gospel ministry, who are set apart by the appointment of God, and with a special promise of his blessing, who has the hearts of all men in his hand to accompany what they deliver agreeable to his word, for the conversion of open sinners, and the edification of those who fear God, and whose office it is to explain the whole compass of our duty to God, our neighbour and ourselves, clearly and adapted to the meanest capacity, with the weight and authority of the reasonableness of the duties themselves, as well as with the superior authority of *thus saith the Lord, your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier*; to show these duties exemplified in the perfect pattern of the Son of God when he was here on earth, and in the lives of holy prophets and apostles and righteous men, who have lived in all ages: to describe these great motives of religion, the rewards and punishments of a future state (which the light of nature only obscurely points at) to the sons of men in the plainest manner, and in all the lively joys of heaven and horrors of hell: to declare and exhibit to sinful men, who are conscious of guilt and naturally afraid of punishment, the method of reconciliation with God, and the atonement for sin: to place before their eyes the awful discovery of the evil and hainousness of sin, and

the necessity of holiness in heart and life ; with the sufferings of Christ for sin ; and the purity of the gospel ; and to inforce the practice of every duty by the powerful motive of the love of Christ constraining us to it, and the supernatural assistance of God's Spirit and grace freely offered to enable us to performance. But I proceed,

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper derive indeed all their obligation from positive institution, but still when considered as means and helps to keep men steadfast in the profession and practice of this holy religion, which is inculcated and recommended by the preaching of the gospel ; besides, being so few, so simple, so free from all appearance of vanity and superstition, so wisely adapted to the end for which they are designed, and men being so apt to be very sensibly touched with visible emblems and rites, while they are in this embodied state, that the greatest enemies of christianity have not been able to object any thing against the reasonableness of these ordinances themselves, but only against certain corruptions and uninstituted superstitions which some who call themselves christians have annexed to them without warrant ; and indeed what can be said against any member of a society to be solemnly admitted into its profession, by a plain and significant rule, intitling him to the privileges, and charging him to the obligations and duties which belong to the professed members of that society as such, which is the design of the sacrament of baptism ; or frequently to commemorate with all thankfulness

fulness and gratitude the dying love of their best Friend, and solemnly and humbly renew their obligations and promises of duty and gratitude to him in the most public manner, with a deep sorrow for their sins, and a hearty resolution, through grace to forsake them, which were the cause of his death. This is the design of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But, finally,

The last institution of public worship I mentioned was our contributing to the necessities of our poor brethren, as God has prospered us, which is plainly founded upon the eternal and immutable law of our creation, and is a branch of it, namely, an universal love towards our fellow creatures, the practice whereof is infinitely enforced upon the disciples of Jesus, who holds what we do for the relief of the least of his little ones as done to himself, and set us an example of this duty far superior to what the world ever heard of before, in becoming poor when he was rich, that by his poverty we might be enriched, and dying for our salvation and deliverance when we were his enemies. But, secondly,

When this epithet, *how amiable*, is applied to the institutions of public worship, it must include their being adapted to promote the best interests of the sons of men, curing their depravity, and increasing their conformity to God, and fitting them for the enjoyment of him.

The attending upon the institutions of public worship is not only our reasonable service, a debt we owe to God our Father, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier, but it is likewise as beneficial to

us as it is clearly just and reasonable in itself. For instance, what can be supposed to have a stronger effect upon the mind of a sincere worshipper of God, to kindle a feeling sense of gratitude, and to conform one to the love of God, and universal obedience to him, to provoke to the imitation of the moral perfections of God, and to fix in our minds the particular grounds of the obligations we are under to be followers of God as dear children, than to join in the lifting up our hearts and voices in the public praises of God, and under an actual sense of his presence, to celebrate the amiable perfections of his nature, and thankfully to recount the multitude of his mercies to us in our creation, preservation, and redemption?

Again, when we realize the presence of God with us, and bow down before the Lord our Maker, and join in the public confession of our sins with a worshipping assembly, surely the sincere worshipper must feel his horror of sin awakened, and himself covered with the most ignominious shame and blushing, and be filled with holy resolutions in the presence of that pure being to whom sin is an offence, as well as a violating all the obligations of his unbounded goodness and mercy. The consideration again of the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus, how apt to inspire with a humble and reliving hope of finding mercy and forgiveness from our heavenly Father, as well as with a freedom and child-like confidence in pouring out our hearts, asking his holy Spirit, and spreading all our wants and diseases before the Father of mercy,

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in the prevailing name of Christ, whom he hears always, with a firm confidence; and that in his infinite goodness, and wisdom, and faithfulness, he will accomplish all our desires, that are agreeable to his will, and that he knows to be really good for us? Shall I add here, that the joining in the public intercession that we put up for others, has the most beneficial tendency to awaken and cherish every benevolent affection of soul towards others, as well as to make us sensibly feel the obligations of duty we are under to God, whose lot is in so many respects comfortable beyond thousands of our fellow creatures.

But the time would fail me to speak of the happy tendency which that wise and gracious institution of heaven, the public and weekly preaching and hearing of the gospel has, as a mean, by the blessing of God, for promoting the good of mankind in this state of ignorance and depravity, or to recount the blessed effects it has actually produced, and does still produce, this way. What a gracious provision is this for the instruction of the ignorant, the admonishing and striking conviction into the wicked, the checking and restraining those who are solicited by the temptations of satan, the world and the flesh, easing and comforting the melancholy, the doubting and the weak, confirming, establishing and carrying on to greater perfection even the willing and obedient: in a word, it is a mean of conveying to men all proper assistance for exciting them to know and perform their whole duty.

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When we reflect how little all the moral discourses and the indefatigable pains of the wiser and better sort of the heathens availed for the reformation of the lives and tempers of their professed disciples and themselves, confessing their utter despair of ever being able to reform any considerable part of mankind by their philosophy; and on the other side contemplate the preaching of the gospel of Christ, becoming the power of God and the wisdom of God for the salvation of men; conquering nations and cities of idolaters to the worship of the true God; fornicators and adulterers becoming chaste and holy; thieves learning honest labour; the covetous seeking treasures in heaven; drunkards becoming sober and temperate; and of these, some rude barbarians, some prejudiced Jews, and some polite and learned Gentiles. Besides the saving change that the gospel works upon the tempers and lives of many in every age and place where it is preached; and as an useful and polite writer of this age observes, The returns of the public teaching in the christian weekly assemblies of worship, is the great mean of keeping alive a sense of God and religion; the obligations of conscience upon the minds of men, without which human laws would be but feeble and ill observed things.

As to the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, the frequent administration of the ordinance in baptism before the eyes of a christian assembly, tends greatly to revive in the mind of every beholder the remembrance of their own once solemn dedication to God in

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that ordinance, and to check our declining from our stedfastness in the faith and practice of the gospel, to excite us to improve the privileges of our descent from religious parents, and our early dedication to God, being numbered among his family and children, and of asking of our heavenly Father in the name of Christ remission of sin, and the holy Spirit to enable us to fight successfully against satan, the world and the flesh.

The administration of the Lord's supper again must leave the most salutary and beneficial effects upon the mind of every sincere christian that enters into the bonds and engagements of God's covenant by receiving this seal of it, not only by means of the preparations, exercises of solemn self-examination, prayer and meditation, that are indispensibly necessary in order to a worthy participation of it, but also in the very action itself, which brings to remembrance the dying love and the bitter sufferings of our blessed Redeemer; for our sins must, in the most lively manner, fix the obligations we are under to live to him who died for us, and to hate and forsake our sins which were the cause of his sufferings. The occasion it affords of learning from his suffering example, the very best lessons of patience and resignation to God under our trials, love to all our fellow creatures, and especially to our fellow christians, forgiveness of injuries, and stooping low to do good to the very meanest.

And finally, our contributing weekly in our worshipping assemblies to the necessities of others,
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is of real advantage to us, as we thereby procure for ourselves an interest in the prayers of those whom we relieve, and habituate ourselves in the practice of a duty which is an imitation of God himself, who is good and does good, and is not ashamed to call himself the protector and portion of the poor; we acquire thereby a right to the promises of God's pity to ourselves when we are in distress, and desire a blessing from him on our substance and posterity.

Inferences. 1. If the tabernacles of God are amiable, that is, If the public ordinances of the gospel are a reasonable and profitable service, then those act a most absurd part as well as do themselves a real injury who despise and habitually disdain them; and yet, my good friends, how common a case is this become in our day? a certain sign of the decay of religion among us. I know not how it comes too that this evil and folly is become a thing so common among those who pretend to be more knowing and fashionable than others; indeed it is hard to account for this, but it is simply impossible that a man's becoming more knowing and more polite than others, that is, one's being wiser and more humane and benevolent than others, should lead him to profane God's Sabbaths by journeyings, carowing, and ordering his worldly affairs on that day, and throwing off a regard to the public praises of God, and be above joining in the public prayers, and disdain to confess God before men in the Lord's supper, and shut every occasion of hearing a good sermon, or contributing with his fellow christians for the relief of

the poor, and by this example encouraging every weak witling and fop to commence an enemy to religion. For certain this must be owing either to a very thoughtless inattention, and what a pity is it that such persons should be guilty of a heedlessness which must be criminal, as it is a parent of so much disregard to God's institutions, and so hurtful to others; or else it flows from downright impiety and a contempt of christianity itself, if this last be the case; and indeed it brings to my remembrance the words of one who of late made a great figure in the learned world, when speaking of these institutions of christianity of which you have been hearing, his words are, (and I wish we would ponder them) *If these things be perfectly agreeable to nature and right reason, and tend exceedingly to supply the deficiencies of it, let none, under a pretence of maintaining natural religion, forsake the assemblies of christians, and revile and blaspheme the doctrines and institutions of the christian religion, lest they be found liars unto God.*

2. If the tabernacles of God are amiable, let us consult our own happiness, and be in the road of our duty, and stedfastly attend those institutions of worship; let us leave it to the atheist and infidel, to hold the gospel revelation in derision, and boldly deny the Lord that bought them; let us leave it to the debauchee, that wears the christian name, but is impatient of the wise and beneficial restraints of religion, to turn his back upon the worshipping assemblies of christians; but let us ever retain a thankful
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sense of the goodness of God to us, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but provoking one another to love and good works.

to v3. The subject I have been upon, and the occasion of this assembly, both bespeak us who minister in holy things; and, my reverend brethren, when we think how much lies on our heads as leaders of the public praises and prayers, as administrators of the sacraments, and preaching of the gospel; what need have we to get a temper of mind sincerely religious, touched with a lively sense of the love of God, with a zeal for the honour of Christ, and the laws of our holy religion, and with compassion to the souls of men; what need have we to charge our own consciences frequently with the apostle's directions to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 13. to the end of the chapter; least we through sloth, ignorance, inattention, careless living, or deceitfully handling the word of God, make the assemblies of the Lord abhorred on our account, as Eli's sons did; when our friends or our enemies keep a strict and jealous out-look after us, what need have we to be strictly watchful over ourselves in public and private life, that our enemies may not reproach us, as having lost the sobriety, the vigilance, the diligence, and the regularity of life and conversation of our fore-fathers, where- by they stopped the mouths of those who waited for their halting, and that our friends may never have cause to complain that we have lost the spirit of our fore-fathers, and are not like their old ministers, upon whose labours we are entered;

that we neither pray nor preach, that we do not live and converse like them. Besides this very occasion of this assembly, namely, the expediting a call for a successor to our worthy brother Mr. Burnet, has a very significant language to us, my reverend fathers and brethren; our valuable friend died in the midst of the lamentations, and has left a savoury remembrance of himself upon the minds, of a flourishing and numerous congregation, which he gathered and kept together in this place, for upwards of thirty years, in spite of many oppositions, and we trust has received the higher approbation of, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy master's joy.

O that we who survive may be enabled to fulfil our ministry, that when we have reached the bounds our Lord has set us in our work and service here below, and others are called to do this office to our congregations, that we are to do for our deceased brother, we may shine in the firmament of glory with those faithful men who turned many to righteousness and saved themselves and others.

4. The subject and the occasion of our meeting naturally bespeaks you, my good friends of this congregation, whose comfortable experience we trust can furnish out a great deal more of the amiableness of the tabernacles of God than you have at this time heard of. We most sincerely condole with you on the loss of your late worthy pastor, with whom you so long took sweet counsel, and went into the house of God together. Yet it ought to be matter of thankfulness and relief to you, that tho' ministers die away,

one after another, yet Jesus Christ is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, and he will never want proper instruments to carry on his own gracious and wise designs in the world.

Be thankful for this occasion of giving your consent to your having a gospel-minister settled to minister stedfastly in holy things among you, and to put an end to your broken, interrupted, and many times disappointed attendances on the amiable tabernacles of God. Learn then continually to revere the dread sovereign of life and death, who does all things well, and to fix all your hope and expectation upon him who is the wise and faithful dispenser of all graces and blessings, from one generation to another, and is able to furnish his servants suitably to the times and places where he calls them to act. And may he graciously countenance the work of this day, and direct all for his own glory, and the good and edification of your souls. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N V I I I

Preparation Sermon, preached at 21 June

June 12, 1743

I John 1. 9

In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live in him.

I shall not at all detain upon the connection of these words with what goes before and follows after, but just to observe, that in the verse preceding the text, the apostle had said, God is love; that is, love is an essential property of the divine nature; and all his works as well as his word clearly manifest that he is good and all. All of us here present are living in the midst of this great truth, in that we are placed in the order of rational beings, in that our lives are to this day lengthened out into the body and care of divine providence, in a land of hope, in that we have bread to eat and **S E R M O N** in that we have relations and friends, in that we have other invaluable blessings, on us and continued with us, that we are conscious

S E R M O N VIII.

Preparation Sermon, preached at Slains.

June 12, 1743.

I John iv. 9.

In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro' him.

I Shall not at all detain upon the connection of these words with what goes before and follows after, but just to observe, that in the verse preceding the text, the apostle had said, *God is love*; that is, love is an essential property of the divine nature; and all his works as well as his word clearly manifest that he is good unto all. All of us here present are living monuments of this great truth, in that we are placed in the order of rational beings, in that our lives are to this day lengthened out thro' the bounty and care of divine providence, in a land of hope, in that we have bread to eat and raiment to put on, in that we have relations and friends, and innumerable other invaluable blessings conferred on us and continued with us, that we must be
conscious

conscious to ourselves upon the least reflection we are most unworthy of, and have justly forfeited. We on the contrary have deserved a thousand times over to have been consumed, and must confess it is because God is love that we are not this day in the pit of perdition, where their worm dieth not, nor is their fire quenched.

But then in the words of our reading, the apostle strikes a higher note, and calls upon us to survey, with admiration and gratitude, a manifestation of the divine love to sinners of mankind, which infinitely transcends all other expressions of the divine bounty and goodness, and as it were swallows them up in its unfathomable depth, which ought to attract all our attentions, as pleading the tender mercy and love of God above all his other works. *In this was manifested the love of God;* as if he had said, 'There is the triumph of love, the riches and glory of it; the contemplation of which makes even the great and infinite love of God manifested in creation and redemption almost to disappear, and transcends all that eye hath seen, or ear heard, or that could have ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live thro' him. And here observe how the inspired penman's heart burns, and is, as it were lost for want of thought or expression to trace this wonderful love, which indeed is the wonder and admiration of angels themselves, who bend all the force of their superior powers to pry into it; I say the holy man breaks forth in the next verse abruptly, much to the same purpose over again,

Herein

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.

It may not then be amiss to suffer our thoughts to dwell a little upon this endearing subject, especially upon a preparation-day before a communion; and may the love of God be shed abroad in all our hearts by the holy Spirit, that we may speak and hear of it with that holy admiration and gratitude that becomes us. For order's sake, I shall proceed in the following method:

I shall consider this love as manifested,

First, From the nature of the gift proceeding from it, *God sent his only begotten Son*;

Secondly, From the circumstance taken notice of in the words; *he sent him into the world*;

Thirdly, The persons to whom, or on whose account he was sent, *to us*; and,

Fourthly, The inestimable blessing we derive from God's sending his Son into the world for us, that we might live thro' him; and conclude with some improvement.

I. I return to the first of these, namely, to illustrate the love of God towards us, from the nature of the gift proceeding from it, God's only begotten Son. And now what an endearment is it of the mercy of our redemption, that God should employ upon this design no meaner person than his own Son, his only begotten Son? so he is called in the text.

It had been wonderful condescension in God to treat with us at all, but that no less person than his own Son should be the ambassador is an astonishing regard of the high and lofty One to poor sinful dust and ashes. See how the apostle celebrates

celebrates the glory of this divine person, Heb. i. 2, 3, 4. *He hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* We may add that this was not a son out of many, but his only begotten Son, his dear Son, who always had been his delight. The gift is singular; God had not such another to give. You will observe that when God tried Abraham's faith, he aggravated the command by many piercing words, which must needs have touched a tender parents heart, in the most feeling manner, Gen. xxii 2. *And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* And it was a great instance of Abraham's love and obedience to God in that he was ready not to withhold him. This is a demonstration that God exceedingly loved us when he actually sent his only begotten Son into the world to be sacrificed for so pitiful and wretched creatures as we are. But,

II. The love of God is farther manifested from the circumstance taken notice of in the words, *God sent his only begotten Son into the world;* The brightness of the Father's glory, the

the Eternal word, who in the beginning was God, and by whom all things were created, was made flesh, and dwelt and tabernacled among men in this world. How mean were the circumstances of his birth, when his poor mother was denied a room in the inn, which was probably taken up with people of better condition than she, and like to bring more profit to those merciless and abandoned mercenaries who kept it? How low and abject was his state in this world when he came abroad upon his public ministry. The foxes had holes, the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. He bore the contradiction of sinners; a man of sorrows, contempt and reproach, and all kinds of miseries; and at last died a shameful, painful, and cursed death; with all the possible circumstances that could inflame the sufferings in his soul and in his body, and that from heaven, earth, and hell. We find, *Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8.* the circumstance of his being sent into the world set forth with an inimitable significancy; *Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Took upon him the form of a servant; that is, was content to be strangely lessened and diminished; was made in the likeness of men; that is, did really assume human nature, the death of the cross, the death of the vilest slaves and most in-

famous malefactors. Here was abasement indeed for God to become man; for the Lord of glory to assume the form of a slave; for the Lord of life to become obedient unto death, and to die the death of a low and abandoned criminal. Here was love indeed.

Add to this, that it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, Isa. liii. 5-10. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

What infinite love to men must this be which caused the Father to deal thus with his only begotten Son, who had always been his delight? Yet now he exposed the Son of his dearest love to the flames of his severest wrath for us. O what manner of love is this! But,

III. The persons for whom Christ was thus given serve farther to manifest this love of God, and to raise our admiration and gratitude; for us while we were sinners and enemies, in due time Christ came and died for us, Rom. v. 8. Which is emphatically expressed in the verse next to the text, not that we loved God; no indeed; we hated both the gift and the Giver; we were rebels and aliens, nay enemies and enmity against God, up in arms against heaven, and at variance with God, and so by nature odious in the eyes of his spotless holiness, and child-

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men of wrath, or fit fuel for his justice and vengeance. Ezek. xvi. 5, 6, 8. *None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live: yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Who can read this description without wonder and astonishment at the infinite love of God in sending his only begotten Son to heal and cure, to relieve, to justify, and wash, and sanctify, such hell-deserving, loathsome and abominable creatures? Lord, what is man at his best, that thou art mindful of him; but what is sinful, corrupt, guilty man, that thou shouldst visit him thus? Herein is love! But finally,*

IV. The inestimable benefit which we derive in virtue of God's sending his only begotten Son farther manifests the greatness of his love; *that we might live through him*: a most comprehensive expression, by which in the scripture language the whole of a reasonable and immortal creature's happiness is summed up, and fitly, because as life is one of the greatest blessings in itself, so it is the foundation of all other enjoyments; and therefore the apostle useth but

this one word to express to us all the blessings and benefits of Christ's coming into the world, and fulfilling all righteousness in our room, the reparation of all that we lost by the fall, and incurred by the penalty death that was annexed to the transgression of the first covenant. We are sunk into a state of sin and misery, both which are fitly expressed in scripture by the word death, Rom. v. 14, 15. *Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.* We were all dead, lost in a state of sin and misery, as miserable as a malefactor that is under sentence of death, and bound over in chains to an execution-day, from which he cannot, is not able to release himself; so we by nature are under sentence of condemnation, and so dead in law; and Christ finds all his people under the curse of the law; and it was to redeem from it that he came to bear their sins in his own body on the cross, and to suffer once the just in the room of the unjust; that he might give a full satisfaction to the law and justice of God, and thereby reverse the sentence given out against us, and deliver us from that eternal death which was by the righteous sentence of the law of God become our due portion and reward, Rom. iii. 25.

He appeased the wrath of God, and reconciled

ed us by the blood of his cross. But then we were not only judicially dead, but also spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, as the apostle speaks. Every unrenewed person, tho' in a natural sense he be alive, yet in a moral sense he is dead, or dead while he lives, 1 Tim. v. 6. What mortal diseases are to the body, that is sin to the soul, its destruction and death. Sin has so corrupted and infected all our powers and faculties, that the power of God is requisite to release us from the bondage of base lusts and passions, and to renew our natures, and restore us to a life of faith and holiness, and the making us his own willing people.

When our Lord asserts the necessity of a great and saving change to be wrought upon our sinful natures, he compares it to a new birth, and ascribes the work to the agency of the Almighty Spirit of God, John iii. 5. Now the Spirit is so valuable a blessing as cannot be dispensed to rebels against, and aliens from God, but only on the account of a satisfaction made for their offences; and the scripture tells us, that it is on account of Christ's being sent, and coming to redeem us from the curse of the law that we receive this blessing, Gal. iii. 13, 14. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles thro' Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit thro' faith.* By giving his life a ransom he has purchased the Spirit by whom believers are freed from the dominion of sin.

by whom the body of sin is gradually destroyed in them, that henceforth they should not serve sin. Hence the apostle prays in behalf of the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 20, 21. *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* And this life of justification founds the believer's title, as this life of sanctification founds his meetness and fitness for a life of friendly intercourse and communion with God, both in grace and glory.

Those who are washed and purified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace in the name of Christ, in every ordinance and institution of worship, public or private, more ordinary or more solemn, to obtain mercy and find grace to help them in every time of need, while they travel through this valley of tears, of sin and sorrow, and imperfection, Heb. x. 9. Eph. iii. 12. And at last they shall reign in life by Jesus Christ in another and better world: it is in order to intitle us to this felicity that we are justified freely by grace thro' the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and is in order to prepare us for it and to make us meet to be partakers of this rich inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that we are made alive to God by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the

the holy Ghost, and that we are allowed freedom, liberty and access to God, in the duties of his worship, being burdened in this abode of guilt and sorrow for the dawns of that glorious day when Christ who is their life shall appear, when they shall appear with him in glory; who died, as the apostle has it, 1 Thes. v. 10. That we might live together with him, and be presented faultless before the presence of the glory of the Majesty in heaven with exceeding joy.

And now how gloriously does the love of God shine forth in providing such an inestimable blessing for poor sinners that were in such deplorable circumstances? That instead of sending his Son to execute that vengeance upon rebel sinners which they had most justly deserved on account of their multiplied affronts done against the highest Majesty of heaven and earth, yet God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but upon a quite contrary design, that thro' him the world might be saved; to give his own most precious life and blood a ransom for many, and thereby rescue us from the curse of the law, and the jaws of death, and from the lowest hell. And if he had proceeded no farther than this to reverse the sentence of condemnation that stood in full force against us, it had been wonderful mercy and kindness, but his love stopped not here, it was not satisfied with sparing and freeing us from hell, but was restless till a new and living way of thorough reconciliation, access and intercourse with heaven was consecrated also for rebel sinners, by the rending of the vail of Christ's flesh, who is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness,

righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption. Hence the apostle breaks forth into that affectionate admiration of the love of God, Eph. ii. 4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)* And Rev. i. 5, 6. *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* And John iii. 16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Improvement. 1. In general, from what we have heard, let us learn to prize and esteem the gospel of the grace of God; and all its divine institutions of worship, which reveals and makes known the manifold wisdom of God, thro' Jesus Christ, in the whole scheme, contrivance and accomplishment of the salvation of lost sinners in a manner consistent with the glory of all the divine perfections. This seemed impossible to our imperfect reasons and short views of things; we had destroyed ourselves and were not able to raise ourselves out of the ruins of our apostacy, or deliver our souls from spiritual and eternal death; no creature was able to do it: true, God is merciful, but it is as true that he is holy and just: and therefore supposing his
mercy

mercy never so willing to save us, will not his holiness his righteousness and truth check those forward inclinations of his goodness, and hinder all the designs of his mercy. Is not sin contrary to the holy nature of God? Hath not he declared his innate hatred of it: hath he not threatened it with a heavy and dreadful punishment, and said that the soul that sins shall die, and that he will by no means acquit or clear the guilty? So that here is a conflict of the attributes and perfections of God. His mercy pities us and would recover us, would open paradise to us, but there is a flaming sword that keeps us out, the incensed justice of God that must be satisfied, the inviolable truth of God that will not alter a word that is gone out of his mouth, or recal the threatening: and the unspotted holiness of God that is irreconcilable to sin and must discountenance it, and on the other hand, if the sentence of the law take effect there could be no room for the exercise of the darling attributes, mercy and love. But the wisdom of God has removed the difficulty, and by a surprising discovery of the covenant of grace has highly magnified his mercy and love to sinners, above all his other works, and manifested his severe and inexorable wrath and hatred against sin in the sufferings of his only begotten Son. Here mercy and truth meet each other, righteousness and peace kiss each other. This is the mystery that was hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest for the obedience of faith; and how fit is it to prepare for a communion-Sabbath near approaching, to suffer
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our thoughts to dwell upon the tender and self-moving love of God that looked upon the sons of men while the fallen angels were passed by, and parted with his only begotten Son to be the Saviour of men? To think on the dying love of a dear Redeemer who travelled thro' sweat and blood, agonies and wrath, to satisfy the offended justice of God, and repair the ruined nature of man, to renew the correspondence and intercourse between God and us which was broken off by sin? In one word, to bring God and man to dwell together, in grace and in glory? Let such endearing discoveries, no where to be found but in the gospel of Christ, and the dispensation of gospel ordinances, raise and enhance your value and esteem of it, which reveals all this to us, and bind other souls and bodies as living sacrifices to the horns of the altar with the cords of love and gratitude.

2. Here we may see the exceeding evil of sin and the exceeding riches of the love of the Father and the Son to sinners of mankind. How desperately malignant must sin be in itself, and how highly provoking to God, that the love of God must make its way to man thro' the incarnation of the blood and death of Christ before we could be redeemed from this dreadful and deadly evil, sin; that the beloved and only Son of God himself must take on him the form of a servant, and bleed and die, to answer the demands of justice, and set the love of God, as it were, at liberty to distribute pardons, and confer divine and sanctifying influences among men, in order to restore them to the favour of God,

God, and to a likeness and conformity to him, and a meetness for communion and fellowship with him.

How odious then should all iniquity appear to our eyes, that we may be deeply humbled for it, may have no more fellowship with it, but may for ever abandon it, and depart from it. Methinks communion times, above all other seasons, ought to be times of sorrow and bitterness for sin.

And, O how exceeding glorious and endearing must that love of the Father and the Son be, that would work thro' all this difficulty, and be at all this high expence in providing and paying down the great ransom, and placing it to the account of poor sinners; so that God is now just in being the justifier of him that believes in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 25, 26.

You have heard a little of the love of the Father already, in sending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him; but, blessed Jesus, shall we ever forget thy love, in condescending to be made of a woman, and made under the law, to redeem them who were under thy law! What honours didst thou part with, and what glories didst thou leave behind thee, when thou camest into the world in the form of a servant? Thou wast rich, and for our sakes becamest poor; thou wast the object of the homage and adoration of angels and glorified Spirits, and yet for our sakes didst submit to bear the rage of devils, and the reproaches and utmost cruelty of the worst of men threw thee into an agony and bloody sweat. Thy love to

us stretched thee upon the cross, and laid thee up in the silent grave, at which the sun hid his face, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and all nature trembled and shook. O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of this love of Christ which passeth all understanding.

3. Did God manifest his love in sending his Son into the world, that we might have life thro' him; let this put us all upon serious inquiry, whether we are made alive thro' him; are we made partakers of this saving benefit, or are we still judicially and spiritually dead while we live? It is surely of the highest importance to us all to busy ourselves about this inquiry, at all times; for all our religion and all our happiness, living and dying, depends upon it, but more especially, in view of a communion, because your welcome there, as well as your benefit by this gospel-feast, intirely depends on your being alive to God thro' Christ. A dead carcase at a feast with men, is a thing no more odious, shocking and unsuitable, than a judicially and spiritually dead sinner is at this feast with Christ at his table. And on this head, briefly I would offer you the following particulars to assist you in this inquiry:

1. Ask yourselves what you ever felt of the burden of sin; were you ever pricked at the heart and made to cry out in the anguish of your souls, Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved? Have you any saving experience of confessing, lamenting, detesting, and abhorring sin, and yourselves, because of sin, before the Lord, when no eye but God sees you, and imploring the

the mercy of the Son of David, in the language and spirit of the woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 27. If it is so with you it is a token for good; for a sense and feeling of your malady is a symptom of life, besides that Christ came to bind up the broken-hearted, Isa. lxi. 1.

2. Ask yourselves how you stand affected to the gospel-method of salvation, acceptance with God thro' the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ: are you cordially willing to be stript naked as it were of all the pride of nature, of your own righteousness, your own strength, your own duties, and to be covered with the glorious robe of Christ's imputed righteousness as the only ground of your pardon and acceptance with God? Have you seen yourselves so vile by nature, so loaded with actual transgressions? Are you conscious of such sinful defects and imperfections cleaving to your best duties, as make you cry for a washing in the precious blood, and a covering with the everlasting righteousness, in all your dealings with a holy God? It is a token for good. Hunger and thirst after righteousness is a symptom of life; and you have a promise of being filled, Matth. iii. Ask yourselves how you stand affected to Christ's rule and government? Does it grieve you to the soul when you reflect how long you have lived alienated from the life of God, in a sinful course of forgetting and dishonouring him and wronging your own souls in the service of satan and your own hearts lusts; and do your souls breathe after conformity to God in holiness above all other things as your principal felicity; and have you

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cordially consented without reserve to yield the powers of your souls and the members of your bodies servants of righteousness? It is a token for good that you have passed from death unto life.

3. Ask yourselves what experience you have of friendly intercourse and communion with God in the immediate duties of worship, both in public and private. How stand you affected to secret prayer; is it your pleasure; or dare you live in the neglect of it? Can you say in the presence of him that knoweth all things with the psalmist, Psal. lxxxiii. 28. *It is surely good for me that I draw near to God?* And have you any experience of what he says, Psal. lxiii. 1-8. *O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life: my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee, while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: I will remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches. Because thou hast been my help: therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.* It is a token for good that your spiritual life is advancing: for there can be no such intercourse between a holy God and spiritually dead souls. And, finally, ask yourselves.

4. How

4. How stand you affected to the heavenly world? Is it the chief desire of your souls, and your final hope to dwell in a state of everlasting nearness to God as your chief happiness, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven? It is a token for good. These lively breathings and longings are a sure symptom of spiritual life begun, and eternal life hastening apace, 2 Cor. v. 4, 5, 6. *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that immortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.*

These are the decisive questions which all of us ought to be putting to ourselves in our most serious moments, especially before communions, on a preparation evening; and suffer your conscience to reply honestly as in the presence of God, which will both serve to make our way more clear to a communion-table and to understand what part of the following more particular application of this subject belongs to us. To you then I would address myself,

1. Who are conscious to yourselves that you are going on impenitently, without remorse or fear, fatally secure in a course of sin, dead in trespasses and sins, and so have no experience as yet of life from Christ. Beware of touching those holy things to-morrow; you cannot be welcome guests at Christ's table, Psal. l. 16, 17.

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. But, my friends, tho' we cannot bid you welcome to the feast, yet we have full warrant to call you to Christ, to call you to throw down the weapons of rebellion, to call you to acquaint yourselves with God; and be at peace and suffer me to tell you honestly, that you stand on the most dangerous precipice while you are one moment without God and without Christ, the next moment may finish your misery, and render you for ever without hope; and in that case, it had been better for you that you had never been born. Think it a wonderful mercy that you are thus fairly warned of your danger; it is true, you may possibly forget and neglect this admonition, as you have done many formerly. But believe it, you may sleep on and forget all, but your damnation slumbereth not, and these admonitions are kept on record, and will meet you another day, at the judgment-seat, in a more dreadful manner. O then be persuaded to fly from wrath to come. There is a city of refuge provided, and the gates of it are set wide open in the gospel; while there is life there is hope; and God is love, and proclaims peace in your hearing, and will you put away ingratelously the offers of his mercy from you; will you continue the war? He is ready to pardon, and will you the rather harden yourselves in your rebellion? He is willing to be reconciled and make the first offer, and will you be implacable? Think of

of it seriously, whether you will choose to be conquered by his grace, for assure yourselves if that proves ineffectual, he will crush and dash you in pieces, and grind you to powder under the weight of his iron rod. Be wise then, be instructed, kiss ye the Son lest you perish from the way.

2. I address myself to poor convinced souls who are discouraged with fears, as if there could be no pardon or grace for them. My text affords a blessed ground of relief for you, and opens a door of hope for you, how great or multiplied soever your transgressions have been, thy case is not desperate, there is riches enow in the love of God, and there is merit in the blood of Christ, and there is power enough in the almighty Spirit of Christ for the remission of all thy sins, for the sanctification of thy sinful nature; and all the purposes of thy eternal salvation, and a free offer of mercy and peace is held forth in the gospel to encourage thy approach unto God thro' Christ, to obtain all his mercy and grace. Here is sovereign balm for thy wounded spirit, a recovering cordial for thy fainting soul, an everlasting provision for deliverance from the curse of the law, and from the power of sin, and from all thy desponding fears and doubts. God is love, and has manifested his love in sending Christ; he will freely with him give all things; and Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and they that come to him he will in no ways cast out.

3. Here is the richest consolation and the highest obligation to those who have obtained life thro' Christ, when you are called to comme-

morate the love of the Father and the Son in this great work of redemption. Essay to raise the powers of your souls to the utmost pitch of gratitude and praise; cast in your mite with the redeemed on high, *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* Thou art the blessed person described, Psal. xxxii. 12. Thou art passed from death unto life and shalt never come into condemnation, and thou mayest joy in God thro' the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom thou hast received the atonement. The great God is reconciled to thee by the death of his own Son; his justice is no longer thy enemy, but is become thy friend, to promote thy salvation, for God is just and faithful to justify the faithful believer in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. And the love, the tenderest everlasting love of the Father, is towards thee, to deliver thee from all thy sins and sorrows, and to make thee completely happy for ever. O how shouldst thou exalt this free, rich and glorious love of God thro' Christ! Look upon thyself as redeemed from all iniquity that thou mayest not serve sin, and as redeemed to God by the blood of Christ, that thou mayest ever glorify him in thy soul, and in thy body which are his. Propound this love of God to thyself as a pattern and example, and say with the apostle, If God so loved me I ought to love my fellow creatures and my fellow christians. Keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity; and put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, Col. iii. 12. And as your love cannot extend to God so as to be beneficial to him, testify your gratitude to him by kindness

ness, love, and charity to the poor; and repeat what you have often done formerly, the cordial dedication of yourselves, your souls and your bodies, to his honour and service, in obedience to the Father, Son and holy Ghost, who redeemed you at so dear a rate. Amen.

S E R M O N



S E R M O N IX.

*Preached at Logie, on the Thanksgiving-day
after the holy Supper.*

June 14, 1756.

2 Cor. v. 10.

*For we must all appear before the judgment-seat
of Christ; that every one may receive the
things done in his body, according to that he
hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

TH E S E words of the apostle are assigned by him as the reason why he was so careful to fulfil his ministry, and the whole duty of a good christian, because there is a day certainly coming, wherein every man, in whatever station of life God has placed him, must give an account of himself to the righteous Judge of all the earth, and receive the just recompense of his actions done in this life, as verse 9, 10.

The words of the text are of infinite importance to us all; they are plain and easy to the understanding, and need only to be thoroughly believed, and attentively considered, to awaken every

every communicant to a faithful performance of the vows they professed to make yesterday, before God, angels and men, at the Lord's table; and to stir up every one within hearing to a serious care of their lives and actions, considering the solemn account they must give of themselves at Christ's impartial tribunal; where the first thing observable, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, is the certainty of a judgment-day to come, when all men must give an account of their actions to God. We must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; and here many things might be adduced to prove that the heathens themselves, by the mere light of nature, without a Bible, had some very strange impressions of the great truth delivered in my text, namely, that all the world will one day be convened before the impartial judgment-seat of God, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, and to receive according to that they have done, whether it be good or whether it be bad.

I shall mention one instance, Acts xxiv. 25. *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.* Where you will observe, the apostle reasoning on this awful subject, he roused the sleepy conscience of the Roman governor Felix a heathen, and made him to tremble: and these terrors of conscience arise from two obvious principles of natural light wrote upon the tables of every man's heart, namely, that there is an essential differ-

difference betwixt good and evil, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between piety and impiety, between chastity and impurity, between sobriety and drunkenness, or in one word, between virtue and vice, which every rational mind, that is, every man's conscience is as sensible of, as every eye distinguishes betwixt light and darkness, and every man's taste distinguishes between sweet and bitter; and upon this is founded what we call natural conscience, whose motions and admonitions are to every man the voice of God, as it were a law within him directing and inciting him to the practice of this duty; on the one side excusing him, that is, diffusing through all his mind a quiet peace and satisfaction in doing his duty, and filling the mind with comfortable and cheering hopes of the divine approbation and reward, tho' men should persecute and punish him, even for his righteousness' sake; and on the other side accusing him, that is, filling his mind with terrors, chastising him with rods of scorpions, and whips of steel, as a heathen called the remorse and lashes of conscience wherewith wicked men are every now and then tormented in practice of their most prosperous gainful unrighteousness, and impiety, and intemperance, arising from the dread of the after-vengeance of an invisible Judge, notwithstanding their present impunity at the hands of men, Rom. ii. 14, 15. *For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts,*

hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.

2. This will farther be confirmed from another principle of the light of nature, namely, the essential goodness and righteousness of the divine nature, and the equity and justice of his providence and government of the world.

It is natural to expect that he will bring to judgment such of his creatures as are capable of being judged, and to reward or punish them according to their behaviour which is not done here, as indeed the proper season of judgment is not till the time of trial be accomplished; it follows necessarily that it must be done hereafter.

That iniquity shall not always triumph as often it does here, nor that goodness and righteousness shall not always be discouraged and persecuted as it often is here; but that there be a day of recompense, or as the scripture emphatically calls it, *a day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, when God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.

This is the voice of the reason and conscience that is within every man: and to confirm this great truth by the authority of God to make it still more clearly evident even to the meanest capacity and to imprint it upon the minds of mankind with greater weight and force, is one great end and design of revelation, as in the clear and solemn declaration in my text, and Rom. ii. 2-12. *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them*
which

which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation, and wrath; Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God.

Here you see the certainty of this great truth that we must appear before the judgment-seat of God. And this leads me on to observe to you,

II. That this judgment-seat before which all must appear is called by the apostle, *The judgment-seat of Christ*. The light of nature teaches us that God shall judge the world, and the revelation which he has made of his will to us in the gospel doth confirm to us this great truth, and adds, that the administration of this judgment is committed to the Son the Lord Je-

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Ius Christ, which I might confirm to you from many other passages of the gospel-revelation; but it is so clearly expressed in the text that it would be but taking up your time needlessly to produce more texts to this purpose, especially since the difference of the person judging makes not indeed any difference in the rule by which we shall be judged, but is only a signification of God's merciful intention towards mankind, that he has appointed the same person to be our judge whose delights were with the sons of men before the mountains were brought forth, and ere ever the foundations of the earth were laid, and who in the fulness of time condescended to take our nature and not the nature of angels upon him, and to be made subject to all our weakneses and infirmities, and to be tempted in all things, like as we are, sin only excepted, and at last died in our room and stead, in order to reconcile us to God, and lay us under a powerful constraint to live to him who died for us; and therefore who can from his own feelings and experience have compassion on the ignorant, and those that are out of the way, for that he himself was also compassed about with infirmity. And on the other side, the appointment of the Saviour of men to be the Judge of men at the same time, is an aggravation of the ingratitude, and the terror of presumptuous and impenitent sinners to consider; and may God awaken all such if any such are within hearing, to consider before it be too late, that the same merciful Saviour who gave himself for them to have redeemed them from sin and hell by his death, and has sent them so
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many gracious invitations to repentance, so many Sabbaths, so many communions, so many fast days, and preparation and thanksgiving-days, and all with the kind intention of prevailing with them to turn from their sins and amend their lives, shall after all his offers of mercy have been despised, come himself with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment; that he himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch angel and with the trumpet of God, and set his throne for judgment, and before him all nations shall be gathered, and he shall separate between the righteous and the wicked, as a shepherd separates between the sheep and the goats, and will then take vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of his Son, who will be punished with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, and to be glorified and admired in all them that believe and obey the gospel, whom he will bid welcome into the kingdom of his father, prepared for them before the foundation of the world; and though the particular time when this awful day of judgment shall be, is for the wisest reasons kept a secret from us, namely, that every day of our lives might be a day of preparation for it, and we might always watch and be ready for it; this only the scripture assures, that as a snare it shall come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. So that whatever be the time of our Lord's coming to judgment, how near or far off soever, it makes no difference to any particular person, seeing every man's parti-

cular concern in the judgment of the great day depends intirely on the state he himself shall be in at his own death, which time every one may be sure cannot be very far off, and none of us know but this night our souls may be required of us: and therefore every man ought without delay, without boasting of to-morrow, instantly to prepare for it. For to proceed with the apostle, which is the next thing observable here.

III. That all mankind from the highest to the lowest must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. *We must all appear*, says the apostle; and if it were a possible case that all the world could be convened into one assembly, or that the voice of a mortal could reach all their ears. The words of the apostle here, and those of the psalmist, Psal. xlix. 1, 2. might be addressed to them all: *Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor together*; you must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one, without the exception of one single person, may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Awful indeed, but clear and express to this purpose are the words of Rev. xx. 12, 13. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they*

they were judged every man according to their works.

You see the whole world is ransacked and searched, sea and land, life and death, that none may escape this judgment; and therefore our Lord is so often called the judge of the quick, that is, of those who shall be alive at his coming, and of the dead, that is, of those who shall have died before his coming, 1 Cor. xv. 51--55. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, (for the trumpet shall sound,) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? And Rev. vi. 12----17 And lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief of captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the

rocks of the mountains : and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come : and who shall be able to stand ? Riches and greatness will find no place for bribery, and poverty or meanness will raise no false compassion or pity. Fraud and politics will be able to make no evasion, nor will the number of transgressors awe the judge : but the righteous alone shall be exalted in that day, shall shine in the kingdom of their Father. Which leads us to the last thing observable here, namely,

IV. That every man shall be rewarded or punished according to what he has done in the body. *The things done in the body*, that is, shall receive the reward of the actions done in the body while he was on this earth, in the state of the union of soul and body. Or every man shall be accountable at the day of judgment for all the actions of his life, and receive the due recompense of them, which is in other words to say, that this great judgment will be transacted in righteousness, that the judge of the whole earth will do what is right, and with equity will he judge the nations : and our Saviour himself thus describes it, Rev. xxii. 12. *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* And most particular is the revelation of God in enumerating the several heads of our actions that we must then render an account of to this great Judge ; and that the eyes of our judge are

as a flame of fire, taking notice of us now, and recording them as it were in books to be produced and opened at the great day, as you have in part heard already. In that day our most secret actions, and our very thoughts, as well as what we do in the sight of the world, shall then be brought to open light, Eccles. xii. 14. A most comfortable thing to the sincerely pious, the sincerely upright and good, on the one side, and the most alarming consideration in the world to rouse the hypocrite, the painted Pharisee, and the dealer in the unfruitful works of darkness to cast off these works of darkness, and all those deceitful vails which may deceive their fellow men, but cannot escape the righteous judgment of God.

That in that day not only our actions and thoughts, but our very words will be weighed in the balance, and we must account even for them, Matth. xii. 36, 37. *But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned:* Which ought to terrify men from rash oaths and malicious cursing and imprecations, profane jells upon religion, officious lies and envious calumnies of their neighbours, on the one side; and encouraging the fearers of God to speak much for God and religion as they have opportunity, and to spend much of their time in prayer and praise, and in useful and profitable discourse that may minister edification to them that hear us, and to avoid the evils of the tongue just now re-
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cited. And finally, that men will then be accountable for the omissions and neglects of their duty to God and their neighbour, as well as for their actual commissions of sin against God, and real injuries against their neighbour.

Think of this and repent and amend, you who neglect to pray to the God of your life in secret, and you who neglect to pray to God in your families, who are careful only to instruct and hand your children in the business and employments of a present world, but neglect to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, by a religious education, and your good example, and prayer to God for them, as you vowed for them in their baptism. Think of this and repent, you who neglect the other means of grace; the keeping the Sabbath day holy to God, who neglect the public worship of God on it, and have no relish for the sacrament of the Lord's supper, or the duties of fast-days, preparation and thanksgiving-days. Think of this you that pride yourselves in despising the reproofs and admonitions, and neglect the wise advice of your parents, and neglect to perform the relative duties you owe to your fellow men, and especially acts of mercy and compassion, in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting and ministering to the necessities of the sick and the miserable, according to your duties. And on the other side, this ought to establish the hearts of the fearers of God, in a conscientious punctuality of the duties of religion they owe to God, and the duties of righteousness and mercy they owe their neighbour; and the rather, because

because there in an insinuation obvious in the manner of the apostle's words in the text, that the righteous Judge in that day will proportion his rewards to the degrees of the good or evil which we have done in the body. We shall then receive according to the things done in the body; that is, that good men shall receive in proportion to the degrees of their holiness and obedience of their services and sufferings for God, and the wicked shall be punished more or less, according to the degrees and aggravation of their sins.

And this is a mighty argument to good men to grow in grace, to press forward towards perfection, to be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Let us then press after the highest degrees of holiness, and endeavour to be as good as we can in this world, that in the next our happiness may be the greater. And tho' no degree of holiness can merit everlasting life, and when we have done all we must own we are but unprofitable servants, yet we serve a good master who will consider every thing we do for him, and has promised to set the brightest and most glorious crowns upon the heads of those who have been eminent for holiness and usefulness in this world.

And on the other side, this last consideration might be matter of great terror to notorious sinners; for if the wages of every transgression be death, what dreadful aggravated judgments await those who render themselves in the body remarkable by their wilful and daring provocati-
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ons against heaven? Sure then they must sink the deeper into misery and torment.

I give you the application of the whole in the words of your Bible, 2 Pet. iii. 3--18. *There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now by the same word kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness,) but is long-suffering towards, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away, with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements will melt with*

with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless: and account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation: even as our beloved brother Paul also, according unto the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. And Mark xiii. 32, 33. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is. And Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

I close with one direction, namely, That you earnestly pray to God in the name of Christ to imprint these truths on your minds, and to excite you to timely preparation for this awful day of the Lord; with an assurance that if you sincerely ask his holy Spirit to do this for you, he is willing to bestow him upon you to enable you to do the duty and bear the trials of your christian work and warfare, and to keep you blameless to the coming of Christ.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X.

Methlick, October 27, 1745.

Ezekiel ix. 4.

And the Lord said unto him, Go thro' the midst of the city, thro' the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

THE context, which you may consult at your leisure, gives an account of the watchful providence and tender mercy of Almighty God towards his faithful and penitent remnant in the times of those public calamities which he sent for the punishment of the national and personal crimes of the people of the Jews.

These things, christians, are written for our admonition and instruction, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Every rod of God, every affliction which he sends for the correction of a nation or person, hath a voice in it, a voice which doth not only speak to the sufferers but to the spectators also, and that voice is no other than this, Repent of thy sins, and prevent thine own ruin.

We are assured that the goodness of God is so great, that we had never known affliction but for our sins, that the Father of our spirits never

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corrects willingly, nor grieves the children of men by his severe chastisements but to bring them to repentance for their sins, to make them partakers of his holiness, and thereby prevent their greater misery. My text shews the blessed God in the most amiable light, as inexorable to none but the finally impenitent, who will neither be reclaimed by his mercies nor his judgments, as marking out every humble, weeping penitent for mercy, pulling them as brands out of the burning, screening them from the miseries and plagues which the impenitent were bringing down upon their own heads, putting a difference between him that feared God, and him that feared him not, and 'tis abundant mercy to all after ages, recording this as an incitement to us, and to all the sons of men, to prevent our own final ruin and misery, by flying to the wings of divine protection in times of public misery; which will be ever spread over those men who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed in that land or in that city which provoke God Almighty to inflict his judgments upon it. And has not the course of divine providence towards us in these lands for some years now back been evidently such, that we may all read the tokens of his displeasure against us by the manner of his dealing with us?

Shall I here recount the distresses and miseries which have fallen upon the landed part of our country by means of the cross seasons we have had since the year 1740. wherein tenants and ministers have had their common share? Or shall I bring to your remembrance how much
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our trade has suffered, and what hardships not only our merchants, but you yourselves, in the matter of your manufactures, since the commencement of our foreign war, or tell you how much of the best blood in the nation has been spilt in America and in the continent of Europe, and how much of our treasure has been wasted in the course of it: but now, christians, when we might have been looking for peace abroad and at home, a more dreadful evil it still befallen us, and the flames of a civil and intestine war is kindled among us, and threatens a deluge of misery to our poor native country.

War in any case is a dreadful thing, and one of God Almighty's rods wherewith he chastises the nations of the earth for their sins, and carries horror and misery along with it; but of any, civil wars are the most dreadful. There are many instances, father rises up against son, and son against father; brother against brother, kinsman against kinsman, neighbour against neighbour. Whoever fall on either side, it is still countrymen, and so the strength of the nation is wasted; it is our own flesh and our own blood, our own countrymen that we cut down, kill and conquer. The number of the fatherless, of the widows, of the childless are but increased among ourselves: it is our own cities, our own villages which are burnt down and plundered. And then, my friends, when the terrors of the field are over, which usually end the miseries of a foreign war, in the case of a civil war the greatest miseries do as it were then begin. Whoever proves victorious then are

created the courts of justice, and then comes on all the train of banishments, forfeitures, executions, imprisonments; and yet, christians, to this miserable plight has our sins reduced us, and methinks nothing is a more sad presage of greater calamities yet to befall us, than that we have hitherto been so little reformed by these loud and thick volleys of judgments which have already been thundered out against us. O that God himself may awaken all ranks and degrees of men among us, to repent and amend their ways and their doings, that our iniquities do not provoke God almighty to make a full end of us. Let us then be persuaded to cast in our lot with those sighers and mourners for the abominations that be amongst us, that our protection and happiness may be placed beyond the reach of all the events of time. And for this end, suffer me, 1. To describe the character in the text. And, 2. To describe his happiness. And when I have done that I shall conclude with some improvement.

I. I would explain the character in the text: The men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of the land.

1. They sigh and cry for their own sins; and the reason is plain, because if there be any man that is not conscious to himself that ever he offended and provoked God, that man may have leave to lay all the fault of God's judgments on others. But, christians, who among us can say that our hands and our hearts are pure before our maker? God forbid that such a proud and presumptuous conceit should ever enter into our hearts.

hearts. No, my good friends, all and every one of us have by our sins contributed our share to provoke our most gracious God to visit us with the tokens of his displeasure, and to pour down his judgments on the land wherein we live, and therefore we must and ought to begin with mourning for our own sins. Hence you read that Solomon, in that admirable prayer of his at the dedication of the temple, 1 Kings viii. 37. 41. plainly intimates to us, that in case of a public calamity, such as, sword or famine, we can look for no ease of our distress, till particular persons humble themselves, and mourn for their own personal sins, and the plagues of their own hearts.

Have we or any of us then, been forgettors of the God that made us, by neglecting to pray to him in secret, and in families, have we been blasphemers of his holy name, and customary swearers by it? Have we been sabbath breakers, and malicious envyers, and haters of our neighbours, have we been unclean or impure persons, have we been lyars, and cheats, and drunkards? O then begin with sighing, and crying, for your own abominations! beg God's mercy and pardon for Christ's sake, and resolve through grace wherein you have done iniquity, you will do so no more, Isa. i. 16.

2. These mourners sigh and cry for the sins and abominations of others; and my good friends, if ever we were acquainted with the former part of the description, That is, of mourning in secret before God, for our own sins, 'tis impossible, but we must be affected with the general

privalence of iniquity and vice, which hath overspread the whole nation, and diffused itself thro' all ranks, and in part affected the high and the low, the rich and the poor, pastors and people; nor have any, of whatever denomination, reason to think that God almighty will put a stop to our public calamities, till they produce some good effects in the reformation of the lives and conversations of all degrees of men among us; but on the other hand, we have the justest reason to fear that if we be not reformed by all these terrible things which we have seen and felt these few years back, and do yet see and feel, God will punish us yet seven times worse for our sins: if we still persist in our atheism, our infidelity, our prophaneness, our contempt of God and his worship, in our abominable lusts and impiety, what can we look for but greater judgments, and a more fiery indignation to consume us?

How justly may it be said of us, Isa. i. 4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* And oh, that God may raise up many mourners among us, who may sigh and cry for their own sins, for the crying sins that are to be found in the skirts of too too many among all ranks and orders of men, in the midst of us, such a mourner was Jeremiah among his countrymen the Jews, chap. xiii. 17. Such a mourner was Daniel, chap. ix. 5, 6, 7. Such mourners were Ezra, and Nehemiah, read ix. chapters of their books, and such mourners

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were the faithful few described, in my text. And this leads me next to describe their happiness, which was the second general head proposed:

II. Set a mark upon them: which signifies God almighty's watchful care over them, in the times of the greatest public calamity and distress, and may include in it, 1. That to them that sigh and cry, for their own, and the abominations of a land that is brought into misery and distress; to them I say, belong the promises of divine protection and deliverance. There are three dreadful judgments wherewith God almighty threatens to visit the nations of the earth for their sins; there is the famine, the pestilence and the sword, and there is every thing dreadful denounced against all and sundry, in whatever nation God sends any one of these judgments, excepting only the mourners, and the penitent, which shall be found among them. In regard to the famine, Psal. xxxvii. 18, 19. and Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16. In regard to the pestilence, read their comfort, Psal. xci. 6-11. And in regard to the sword, nothing can be clearer than the whole chapter wherein my text lies. I might add on this head that Noah was the alone mourner in all the old world, he feared God and prepared an ark: and God almighty preserved him from the deluge that drowned a whole world of wretched men, so was Lot a mourner in Sodom; and he was warned to save himself and his family; and the mourners in my text have a mark set upon them, hence the penitent in all ages, and in the worst of times may draw

no small hope from these great deliverances, and these instances of the divine care, whose fears, and tears, and sorrows, for their own sins, and the abominations of those they lived among, have been rewarded even in this world by their preservation till the divine anger has overpast, and better times have been restored, *Isa. lxvi. 10.* But,

2. For illustrating the happiness of those that sigh and cry, for their own sins, and the sins of others, I would, 2. Observe that tho' God's providence does sometimes remarkably interpose even for the temporal preservation of his faithful mourners in times of public calamity as you have heard, yet it is not always so. Many times judgment begins at the house of God itself, and common calamities are suffered to overwhelm the righteous with the wicked. But in this case, which is the worst can be put, blessed are the mourners, blessed are they that have been sighing and crying for their own sins, and the sins of others: they shall be comforted with the consolations of God which are not small, even when outward strokes fall heavy upon them, *Isa. lvii. 15.* And, my good friends, how does it lighten and ease the heaviest outward trouble, to have the burden of guilt taken off the mind? To have the humble hope of peace with God thro' Christ; and feel within ourselves from the comfortable reflection of our own minds, that we have been mourners for our own sins, and mourners for and not partakers in the sins of others. This is a firm ground, not only of patience, but of joy and rejoicing too, in the saddest and most dismal

dismal circumstances that can affect our outward condition, Hab. iii. 17, 18. and 2 Cor i. 12. And tho' this part of the happiness of God's mourners is better felt by far than it is possible to make words of it to others: yet to illustrate it further, suffer me to contrast it with the sad case of those in the times of public calamity, who instead of having been mourners for their sins, have been living in a course of contempt of God and disobedience to his laws. Saul is a sad picture of the double misery of such, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. But I proceed to observe,

3. For illustrating the happiness of the penitent and humble mourners. That however it fare with them in this world, for certain at death such a scene of joys for evermore, and comfort without end will open to their view, as will surprize them, and make them forget all their sorrows. Then to the full shall they have beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness, and the garment of praise for mourning, Isa. lxi.

3. Then God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and their sorrow and sighing shall cease for ever and ever, Rev. xxi. 4. and xxii. 3. Thus with what triumph and elivation of soul doth the blessed apostle Paul (who had many a mournful day on earth for his own sins, and often wept for the sins of others) go through many a sharp trial and toilsome labour? I say, how did he exert and lift up his head for joy, when he knew that the time of his dissolution drew nigh; tho' it was a violent death he had in view to undergo? 2 Tim. iv. 6--9. But the ungodly, the impenitent, the mockers at mourning.

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 ing for sin are not so. Death is the most dreadful thing in nature to a wicked man; then all evils assail him at once, pains without, and terrors within, a weak body, and a greatly terrified mind, death ready to strike the last stroke, and hell open to receive him.

The application of the whole yet remains, and as I have the whole discourse in as practical and plain a strain as possible, so as life and death hath been set before us already: let me call upon all within hearing, to search ourselves, each for himself, whether we are of the number of these humble penitents already described, and as we have cause to look upon ourselves of that character or otherwise we have heard already, whether happiness or misery, living or dying, are like to be our portion; and oh that those who are conscious to themselves, that instead of mourning for their own sins and the sins of others which have provoked God to send the tokens of his anger upon our country, are grossly guilty to themselves of living in the known and wilful transgression of God's laws without remorse or fear. Oh, that such, if any such are within hearing, would be persuaded for their own souls sake, and for the poor country's sake, to go home and sit down in soberness, sadness, and think what the end of a wicked life will certainly be: ah sinners, God almighty has a thousand arrows in his quiver, and if he let but one of them fly at thee, he is able to set thee up as a *Magor misabib*, a terror to thyself, and all round about thee even in this world.

But if that will not prevail with thee, oh ponder,

a death day, and a judgment day that is acoming, and thou knowest not how soon it may be upon thee, and a dreadful day it will be to the impenitent. Consider this and be afraid ye that forget God; join trembling, mingle mourning with your mirth, turn at God's reproof, break off thy sins by repentance, and thus prevent thy own ruin! On the other side, let every humble penitent soul read their happiness in my text, and rejoice in it.

Tho' you weep and are sorrowful for your own sins and the sins of others, this is that sadness of the countenance by which the heart is made better. Thus you shall have protection in the day of public calamities as far as God shall see it for his glory and your good, and for certain you shall have joys, that strangers do not intermeddle with, and which the world cannot take from you, to mingle with your tears on earth; and shortly you shall reap a harvest of joys that shall never end, and drink of the waters of pleasures that are at God's right hand for ever more. I close all with a few advices.

1. Let us all humble ourselves before the God whom we have provoked by our sins to inflict rods and judgments on the land wherein we live: we have among other sins abused our gospel light, we have abused our long continued time of peace and tranquillity, we have abused our plenty, and we have abused our civil liberty, and God is threatening us with the loss of them all at once, and an unfeigned repentance for our sins is the only way to escape threatened judgments. Heathen Niniveh prevented their ruin
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by a timely repentance, Jonah iii. iv. chapters, and our most gracious God is still ready to reprove and pardon penitent sinners.

2. Follow the good example set you by those sincere mourners whose lot fell in evil days, as ours has ; days of great wickedness, and days of threatned and impending judgments, I mean humble and earnest prayer and supplication to the Father of mercies, in the name of Christ, by prayer and intercession with God. Moses alone prevented the utter ruin of the whole nation of Israel, Exod. xxxii. and 1 Kings xvii. xviii. Elijah by prayer both shut and opened heaven ! Implore mercy to yourselves, protection to your families ; implore the forgiveness of the sins of the land for the sake of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world ; and beg that God would scatter these clouds of wrath that are gathering, and hovering over our guilty heads, and threatning us with a deluge of misery, of woe, of blood : and that he would preserve to us our holy religion, and our happy civil constitution, and transmit them to latest posterity ! That he would deliver us and them from popery and tyranny, and put an end to the infidelity, and immoralities of the age and nation.

3. Let us follow our prayers and our tears with sincere endeavours to reform and amend our hearts and our lives. Ah, let the drunkards learn to be sober, and the unclean person become chaste, let the liar begin to speak the truth to his neighbour, and the prophane swearer to fear an oath, let the Sabbath-breaker sanctify God's Sabbaths and the prayerless persons and families
worship

worship the God in secret that made and preserves them, their children and servants; let the hater and the injurer of his neighbour who dwells safely by him, purge his heart of the leaven of malice and envy, and love his neighbour as himself: and in a word, let the language of all our hearts, and of all our lives be, As it is meet unto God, we have born chastisement; we will not offend any more: what we know not may God teach us, and wherein we have done iniquity we will do so no more.

In that case we may look for a restoring of our breaches, and a lengthening out of our tranquillity; yea, and for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, even to our eternal salvation; which, God of his infinite mercy grant, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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S E R M O N X I.
A C T I O N S E R M O N .

Tarves, June 9, 1754.

John vii. 37.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

TH E S E words were spoken by our blessed Saviour during the feast of tabernacles, which was one of the three great festivals of the Jewish church, when all the males in Israel were appointed to appear before God, Lev. xxiii. 34. On the last day of the feast, the people who had dwelt for the space of seven days before in tents made up of the green branches of trees, were commanded to assemble before the Lord; all servile work was prohibited, and an offering made by fire was to be offered unto the Lord. On this great day of the feast which brought all the people together, our Lord takes occasion of that great concourse, to offer himself and his salvation to them, as the end of all their sacrifices and typical worship, and as one equal to all the wants and wishes of sinful, guilty, and miserable creatures. On this last and great day of

the feast, it was usual to offer up water unto God, which was drawn out of the pool of Siloam and brought into the temple with the sound of a trumpet, while they were sacrificing, using these words, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.* Possibly our Lord had an eye to this favourite custom, and in the instant of its being done, he proclaimed with a loud voice, he stood up and cried to the people, that they would apply to him the fountain of living waters, for that abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness which he had to bestow, readily and freely, to every sinful man and woman that felt a need of them, and without which they must perish in their sins.

The words of my text in this light are a moving description of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his good will to men. They show his thorough knowledge of our wants as we are sinners, and his kind inclination and full ability to supply them, (*Jesus stood and cried*) and therefore call for our most attentive consideration and regard on this solemn occasion, when we are assembled in his name to celebrate the memorial of his death in the holy supper. All I intend from them, shall be in a dependence on divine aid, 1. To offer you a few observations for explaining the meaning of them, and 2. To deduce some practical inferences from them, suited to the occasion of our being together at this time.

Observe, I. Our Saviour Jesus makes an offer of himself in the text to sinners of mankind in his full character, *If any thirst, let him come*
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to me, and drink. This observation is founded upon the circumstances of the time and place when our Lord stood and cried in these words, at that instant the people were worshipping before the Lord whom they had offended, while an offering made by fire as an expiatory sacrifice was burning on God's altar: as if the Lord had said, 'These burnt-offerings which are called sacrifices of expiation and atonement, have no virtue but what is derived to them, from me the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; I am that great propitiation for sin which God hath appointed, which God hath set forth, which God hath accepted; it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats can take away sin, That is, release the sinner from the curse and death due to his transgression; but I came hither in this body prepared for me to offer myself a sin-offering, who knew no sin, in your room, who are born in sin, and to this day have multiplied your transgressions, to throw myself into those flames of wrath which would have consumed you, to bear your sins in my own body upon the tree, that you might be absolved from the guilt and delivered from the punishment of all your sins, that you might be accepted of God, and be no longer aliens and enemies under a curse, but brought nigh by the blood of my cross, as reconciled friends and favourites of heaven; in me there is redemption through my blood, even the forgiveness of sins: if any of you are mourning and bowed down under a sense of the guilt of your sins and the fears of threatened condemnation, let him come to me, I stand stretch-

ing forth my hands full of pardons for rebel sinners that are penitent: And, my christian friends, are there none here to day feeling their need of this complete Saviour in this branch of his character, namely, The great Propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the world; none here to day weary and heavy laden, having no rest in their flesh nor ease in their bones because of their foolishness, and from an apprehension that God's wrath is gone out against them, oppressed and bowed down; with the prodigal fears and confesses, Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; and with the publican, smiting on their breasts, standing afar off as unworthy to lift up their faces to God in the heavens, because their great transgressions are gone over their heads as a heavy burden, and their trespasses have reached unto the heavens, so that your moisture is turned into the drought of summer? to you does our blessed Saviour make the offer of himself, to you does he open a door of hope, to you does he consecrate a new, a living way of access, of peace and reconciliation thro' the rending the vail of his flesh, and this day, Christ Jesus the Lord is set before your eyes as crucified, that you may flee to his wounds for pardon and peace with the God whom you have offended. Lord, give you grace to improve so precious a season; and chearfully obey so affectionate a call.

But further, at the time when our Lord stood and cried in the words of my text, the people were bringing water with the sound of trumpets from the pool of Siloam, to offer before the Lord;

Lord ; and our Lord exhibits himself as authorised and fully qualified to clear away the moral defilement wherewith sinners are stained and corrupted, as the end of all their outward and typical washings of water that were performed under the law ; as if he had said, This water that is brought before the Lord, and offered with all this solemnity, and which is so great and necessary a blessing in itself, can but wash away the filth of the flesh, can but nourish and satisfy the calls of a perishing life ; what it does to the body is but an emblem of what I can do for your souls ; therefore, if any man thirst, let him come to me this day, and he shall be satisfied to his experience, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. I am called Jesus because I save my people that come unto me (by the pure precepts of my word, by the awful threatnings and alluring promises of my gospel) from their sins : I am come to purify the unholy as well as to justify the ungodly. And you will observe the evangelist takes notice of this in what follows, ver. 39. This he spake of the spirit, which they that come to him, that is, who believe on him should receive.

And my christian friends, are there none here to day feeling their need of this complete Saviour in this branch of his character ; are there none of you feeling with the apostle, and bemoaning yourselves in his language, Rom. vii. 24. *wretched man or woman that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death ?* Are there none mourning over their captive state, their fetters wherein they are held to sin, and vanity, the instability of their own resolutions,

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the weakness of their own strength, the prevalence of temptation to that degree that they are ready to sink into despondency, and say; Ah, the Ethiopian can sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than I who am accustomed to do evil can renew my nature, and bring my backward heart to the love and practice of my duty. To you, and to each one of you, that are thus hungry and thirsting after righteousness, after conformity to the precepts and pattern of Jesus, is the compassionate Redeemer of men addressing himself, *Let him come to me, and drink.*

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can make you free from the law of sin and death; and he commands you, and authoriseth you this day, *to ask that you may receive, to seek that you may find, to knock that it may be opened to you:* he assures you, that your heavenly Father is more willing to bestow the holy Spirit upon the soul that feels a need of his renewing and sanctifying operations, than ever you or the most tender parent on earth was willing to give bread to his hungry child when he cried to him, Luke ii. 9-14. How many diseased souls and bodies of men and woman did this almighty and compassionate Physician heal when he tabernacled among men in the days of his flesh; and his power, and skill, and tenderness, are the same to-day, yesterday and for ever: turn then at his reproof, behold he is ready to pour out his Spirit upon you, and to make known his words to you; these precepts, these promises, this example accompanied by the divine efficacy of his Spirit doth accomplish the rod of his strength; the day of his

his power makes the willing come to him in the beauties of holiness, can subdue the stoutest sinner to his obedience; his word and spirit is able to quicken us who are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and form the divine nature, as the apostle calls it, 2 Pet. i. 4. the godly disposition of mind, and make us faithful in all the christian graces and virtues, of faith, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity: and we have this day a golden season put into our hands of imploring his sanctifying grace, and of saying at his table, *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee; thou tasted that bitter death which is commemorated in the supper, that by those stripes thou then bore, diseased souls like mine might be healed; wash me, my hands, my head and my feet, that I may be clean every whit; purify me to thyself as one of thy peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

But further, the Lord makes an offer of eternal salvation, to complete his character, as a saviour to sinners of men who are made immortal; *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink;* and some think that the harvest of eternal life and glory, thro' the death and grace of the promised Messiah was shadowed to the Old Testament believers at the feast of tabernacles, while the burnt offering was consuming on the altar, and the water from the pool of Siloam was brought into the temple with the sound of a trumpet; the people shouted, saying, *With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

This eternal life and salvation which is shadowed

dowed here, as if he had said, I was manifested to bring to light; *I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me tho' he were dead; yet shall he live,* John xi. 25. Hence said that same beloved disciple, 1 John v. 11. *This is the record of God, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,* and ver. 12. *He that hath the Son, hath everlasting life:* it is begun in his soul, the happy foundation is laid in the very temper of his mind; and in the relation he stands in to God, as being justified in his sight thro' the blood of Jesus, and washed and sanctified at least in part by the spirit of our God. He hath some glimpse, and some taste, and some experience of the kinds at least of the happiness of heaven, as sufficiently convinceth him of the certainty of eternal life, as well as quickens his endeavours, and enflames his hopes and desires after eternal life, amidst the entanglements and discouragements of a present frail and imperfect state.

And my christian friends; are there none of us longing and looking for the day of complete redemption, when an end shall be for ever put to our being further harassed with the wiles, and devices, and artifices, and fiery darts of satan, our restless tyrant, when we shall have no more conflicts with remainders of corruption within us; when we shall be no more teased and disturbed with the terrors or allurements of a vain and sinful world without us, when we shall bid adieu to all the uneasy and fretting diseases of a falling tabernacle, and to all the fears and terrors of death the king, of terrors: but mortality shall be swallowed.

lowed up of life, and we admitted into the joy of our Lord, to hunger no more, nor thirst any more; but to follow the Lamb to the fountains of living water, and drink of the rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand for ever more. To be safe past all the dangers of our state and trial, and have the palm of complete victory over all our enemies put into our hands.

To you and to each one of you, my christian friends, that are thirsting for the waters of eternal life, is the compassionate Redeemer addressing himself, *Come to him and drink*; and the water that he will give you to drink, shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life: as our Lord expresses it in the parallel passage, John iv. 14. That blessed Redeemer whose death you are this day to commemorate in the supper, is alive, and he liveth for evermore: the government of the visible and invisible worlds is upon his shoulders, death and life, things present and to come, height and depth, angels, principalities and powers are all in his hand, and under his controul and dominion: all the joys and glory of heaven are in his hand and at his disposal: hence said the Lord, John x. 27, -31. *My sheep hear my voice, &c.* Whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies, and whom he sanctifies, them he also glorifies, Rom. viii. 30. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life in him, and I will raise him up at the last day.* But I pass on to a 2d observation, namely,

Observe, II. That the offer that Jesus makes of himself in his full character to sinners of mankind, is general and universal; *If any man thirst,*

thirst, &c. The Old Testament ministers had their commission limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but in the text, the offer is made to all universally without exception, and our Lord's commission to his ministers was, Go, preach the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem: to all nations. Yes my christian friends, and if it were possible to convene all the sons and daughters of Adam that dwell upon the face of the earth into one assembly, and that the voice of a man could reach all their ears; we are authorised to address them in the language of Psal. xlix. and i. ii. Hear this all ye people, give ear all ye nations of the world, both low and high, both rich and poor together, to you, and to every one of you without exception, is Christ and his salvation freely offered: *If any man thirst, let him come to him, and drink; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely!* without respect to what kindred or language, or tongue, or nation he belongs, Gal. iii. 28, 29. *For there is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs, according to the promise.*

Are you young, he offers himself to you, tho' it may be you have been forgetful of him, and now commands and calls you to remember your Creator and Redeemer in the days of your youth: and if you are athirst, if you have seen the evil of your sins, and felt the danger and misery of living without God, and without Christ in the world;

Salvation offered to all

to the young

world; if you are desirous to be sanctified, and justified, and washed in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, and to yield yourselves without reserve to live to him who died for you, and rose again; come to him, he loves them that loves him, and they that seek him early shall find him.

Are you old in years, and on the brink of the grave? He that has taught you from your youth will not leave you now ye are old and gray-headed. Lift up your heads for joy, because the day of your complete redemption draweth nigh: are you old in years, and even old in sins? Nay tho' your iniquities have exceeded, yet are you now athirst, despair not, for some are called even at the eleventh hour; the door of mercy stands open to the eleventh hour; rouse at last out of your security and your sins, before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains! He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, whether they be old or young, he rather ye would turn, Turn ye, turn ye: cry for that mercy which you have so long abused, and so often despised, why will ye die, O house of Israel; there is balm in Gilead, there is a Physician there, who can cure the most inveterate soul-diseases, and this day makes an offer of himself for the cure of the oldest sinner within hearing.

Farther, are you rich, trust not in ungodly riches, which may take themselves wings and flee away and leave you desolate on earth, and for certain you must die and leave them behind you to others; and if you are not rich towards God, ye will find yourselves miserably poor when God

having loved his own he loveth them to the end.

requires your souls of you: if you slight the Redeemer's calls of mercy, your silver and gold, your being rich and increased in worldly things cannot save your bodies from the power of the grave, far less ransom your souls from the power of hell. Hasten thou to the precious merit, and blood of Jesus for pardon; implore the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost, while the season is in your hands; lay up treasures in heaven, thirst for righteousness, it is Christ only who has the riches to bestow that are durable as your immortal souls.

Again, are you poor in this world? The call is to you also from Jesus, who is no respecter of persons, in his abundant grace became poor like one of you, that you thro' his poverty might be made rich! Tho' you have no money, Isa. lv. 1, 2. *Ho, every one, &c. and him that hath no money let him buy.* To the poor the gospel is preached, and the poor often receive it, and become rich in faith, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance; when the rich despise it, and are sent empty away, with their pitiful portion of receiving their good things in this vain transitory life. These are glad tidings, my dearly beloved, of good things, published in the ears of sinful men, and sinful women; the Lord help us all, young and old, rich and poor, to receive the faithful saying this day with all acceptance, That Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners, of all nations, of all ages, of all conditions, and even some of the chief of them, that there may be many earnest supplications and resolutions sent this day to the throne of grace in Christ's

Christ's name among us; in the words of Psal. li. 1, 2, 3, 7, &c. and lvi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

III. *Observation* Founded on the words for explaining their meaning may be this, namely, Our Lord here describes the prevailing turns of the minds of those who come to Christ, or believe on him to the salvation of their souls, by the natural appetite of thirst: *If any man thirst,* which obviously includes, one's having a lively and touching sense of their indigence and misery; one that is pained with extreme hunger and thirst, feels himself miserable, because he must die if he get no meat and drink, tho' he were in possession of all the world besides: *What is my birth-right,* said Esau, *if I die for hunger?* and our books tell us, that the Persian monarch said, he felt more refreshment from a draught of pond water out of a soldier's helmet besmeared with sweat and blood, than ever he relished from all the glory and riches of the world.

In like manner when a sinful man or woman gets a saving discovery of their lost and undone state by nature, and the danger he is in from the death and the curse, which is the threatened wages of his sin, between which and him there is nothing but the brittle thread of life; nothing can pain him more, this wounds his spirits, this stings and pricks him at the heart, in the most feeling manner, as were Peter's audience, Acts iii. 37. *What shall I do?* It is not in the power of language to give a stronger representation of distress, *What shall I do?* Or like the apostle's, Rom. vii. 24. *Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* and you may
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use this as a mark to try you by, *For the whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.*

Farther, this includes one's having the highest esteem of Christ and his spiritual salvation, none but those who have felt the miseries of a famine, can know so feelingly the worth of fulness of bread, the full soul loatheth the honey comb, but to the hungry, every bitter thing is sweet; till the prodigal was starved almost to death upon husks, and reduced thro' mere hunger to fill his belly with the swines meat, he never knew the value of the fulness of good bread that was in his father's house; it was then he was brought to himself: so it is with those who are truly penitent; they put a value upon the light of God's countenance, and esteem pardon of sin, peace with God in their own conscience, growth in holiness, freedom from the tyranny of satan and their own lusts and passions, and a well-grounded hope of eternal happiness, the one thing needful; for the obtaining of which they count all things but loss and dung. Hence the apostle Peter, (1 Pet. ii. 7:) says, *Unto you who believe he is precious, a hiding-place from the storm, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; to the hungry meat indeed, and to the thirsty drink indeed.*

And by this you may try yourselves further; this character includes one's ardently desiring and endeavouring to have the want they feel supplied, and the misery they feel relieved. The want of bread and of drink are so painful in themselves and so dreadful in their consequences to the hungry and the thirsty, that they will run
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any risque to get relief. Thus we find the Lepers in the famine of Samaria were resolved rather to die by the sword of the Assyrians, while they had hope of relief by the enemy's relenting and having pity on them, than to sit still and die of hunger without hope, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. and here the allusion eminently holds. The sinner's felt misery and danger, the offer of reconciliation and salvation through the blood and grace of Jesus, determines him, like Benhadad's servants, to throw themselves at a venture, with ropes about their necks and sackcloth upon their loins, at the feet of the merciful Prince and Saviour of lost sinners, with like words in their mouths; *Let my soul live: Or with Esther, I will go into the king; it is perishing by the hand of Haman if I stay away, and if I perish, I perish. What though I am vile by nature, what though I have multiplied transgressions, what though I am weak and without strength, as well as ungodly, what though I deserve hell: I will confess all, and humble myself before him. Yet have thousands, as guilty, as polluted, as weak, and as unworthy as I, been justified, and washed, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: I will venture then to throw myself upon his mercy, who knows but he will cast an eye of pity upon perishing me too? He has a pardon for me, as well as for others: He is able to take the heart of stone out of my flesh: He is able to give me the new heart, the clean heart, the right spirit; and if he cast me not from his presence, but put his spirit in me, he is able, of a self destroyed sinner,*

to raise me up a child of Abraham, and an heir of eternal life. This is a mark whereby you may also try yourselves. But I must break off; only a

IV. *Observe.* I must make on the words, and I shall but name it, that our Lord's willingness is great to bestow pardons, and grace and glory to fallen sinners; as if he had said, O that your own feelings, sinners, bore proportion to your real wants and miseries, that you might come to me, who came from heaven out of mere pity, to save you with an everlasting salvation, from the guilt and the power and the punishment of all your sins. I mention this (because many a thirsty soul, that is, many humbled, awakened, mourning penitent, while they can persuade themselves of Christ's ability to save to the uttermost, yet are diffident and full of unbelieving fears, whether he will regard their cry, who are vile and unworthy in their own eyes) to satisfy such that it is his own real character, not to break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He is commissioned from the Father of mercies, to bind up the broken hearted: you see he is here before hand with thee, in making an offer of his complete salvation to the penitent: *Jesus stood, to fix the eyes and the attention of all upon him; He cried, that all might hear, as well as to express the fervor and vehemency of his mind, and his eagerness to have the free offer he made accepted; If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.* And this day he has renewed the offer to all of you within hearing! And as a farther testimony of his free inclination to bestow his
salvation

salvation and make you happy, he is this day to be set forth as evidently crucified before your eyes in the sacrament of the supper. Shall he stand and cry, shall he weep and die for you, and will you still be faithless? Come, penitents, let me address you as our Lord did to Thomas, *Reach hither your finger, thrust it into the print of the nails; and reach hither your hand, thrust it into his side.*

Read the compassions of his heart to perishing souls, in dying for you, and be not faithless but believing, *For greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* But Christ commends his pity, his inclination, his willingness to pardon and cleanse you by dying for you, when you were his enemies.

But the application of the whole yet remains, and I am afraid your time is gone, however I have endeavoured to run the discourse in so practical a strain, that he that has heard may apply it to himself, and something of this kind may possibly fall in afterwards; and I shall close this discourse with one inference, namely,

From what you have heard ye may form a judgment of the worthy communicant; of the guest that will be welcome at Christ's table; *Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink.* Enquire then, each for yourselves, have you this spiritual appetite for this spiritual feast? What have you felt of your misery by nature, can you say as in Tit. iii. 3. *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,*

fures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another? How stand you affected to sin? How stand you affected to holiness? Does it grieve you that you have lived so long alienated from the life of God? Then come unto the blood of sprinkling, and get your hearts cleansed, your love inflamed, and your graces quickened. May God bless what has been said; and to his name be praise.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N XII.

Galatians vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

WE are this day assembled in the good providence of our most gracious God, to celebrate the memorial of our dear Redeemer's dying love to us the sinful sons of men in the blessed sacrament of the supper. And may his gracious spirit be poured out upon us, that all we communicants and others, may look on him whom our sins pierced and mourn, and be in bitterness as one mourneth for an only son, or a first-born.

I have made choice of these words of the apostle, now read in your hearing, as a proper subject for our meditation while we are engaged in so solemn and so sacred an action: *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* The occasion of these words was obviously this, The Gentile converts to christianity among the Galatians had, after the apostle's departure from them, been seduced by some false teachers who were Jews, into a be-
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lief, that the ceremonial law of Moses was not entirely abolished, but that circumcision and the other rites of it were still necessary to be observed by all those who among the heathens or Gentiles intended to become christians.

This operation had been entertained and spread by those false teachers, partly out of a superstitious reverence to their law, and a mistaken notion of the true nature and design of the gospel, and partly with a view of lessening the prejudices which the Jews had conceived against the doctrine of Christ, and avoiding those persecutions which the Jews every where rained against those who professed christianity.

The apostle having argued against the teachers and their opinions in various parts of this epistle, returns to the same subject at the close of it, and in the words of the text and the two preceding verses, sums up in short what he had before more largely delivered; *As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh*, acting from carnal views, and for worldly ends, studying popular applause, *constrain you to be circumcised*: not so much from a conviction of the necessity of what they urge upon you, as that they may carry smoothly with all men, and avoid the persecution of the Jews: For he adds, *Neither they themselves*, that is, their false teachers, *who are circumcised, keep the law*. To what purpose then is their circumcision? Even that they may glory in your flesh; that is, that they may boast of having made you proselytes to Judaism in the way to christianity, and by that means recommend themselves to their countrymen the Jews,
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on account of their zeal to the ceremonial law of Moses, at the same time they would be thought to serve the interest of the gospel. But, says the apostle, let them consult their own safety, and affect a false glory by this insincere conduct if they will, but God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ.

As to the general meaning of the words, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; God forbid!* A manner of speech very common, and almost peculiar to our apostle, frequently used by him in his writings, and no less than thrice in this epistle, never made use of but where he intends with a particular degree of vehemency to condemn some doctrine or practice imputed to christians or prevailing among them, by which he thought christianity highly dishonoured. In such cases it is usual with him to express his dislike and detestation of such doctrine or practice by this strong phrase, *God forbid*; as here, *God forbid that I should act upon such low and worldly motives in the propagation of the gospel of Christ, or think to promote it by such injurious methods as those false teachers make use of! God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

By the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are not merely to confine this expression to the tree to which our Lord was nailed; or the piece of wood on which he hang exposed as a spectacle of shame and suffering. True indeed we know, and we are not ashamed to know that he did die that sort of death, the death of the cross; and though

though we heartily disdain the superstitious noise and fabulous nonsense of the papists, who would make us believe, if it would believe for us, that three hundred years after Christ's resurrection the wood of the cross was found buried under ground, by Helen the mother of Constantine, and that thousands of miracles were performed by this wood, and that they have many pieces of it preserved in their churches as relics, which are devoutly worshipped. These idolatries and superstitions we detest, and leave to the blinded followers of the bishop of Rome; let them glory in these things who can believe them. We believe them not, and are ashamed that such pitiful low and false legends have crept into the pure religion of Christ, and found credit among those who call themselves christians. By the cross of Christ, the apostle meant, and we understand, The death and crucifixion of the blessed Jesus, the doctrine of the cross, the chief article of which is, that the great lines of the gospel of Christ crucified centre in the satisfaction made to the justice of God by the sufferings and death of a slain Saviour, who being in the form of God, and who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess him to be Lord, to the glory of the Father. By this sacrifice of
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the cross, that is, by these pains and agonies of soul and body, by that temporary shame and torment which our dear Redeemer endured on the cursed tree, all the Old Testament ceremonies and sacrifices are determined and abolished, by this and this only a real atonement is made to God for our sins; and a new and living way of access to the divine favour opened and consecrated for sinners of mankind: on this consequently all the hopes and happiness of a real christian do depend; and therefore, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: that I should glory*, that is, That I should rejoice, that I should be glad, that I should boast of, and exult and triumph, as the word is used in other places. 2. Mean and ignominious as the circumstances of my dear Redeemer's crucifixion were, I will not be offended at his cross myself, nor fear that others should be offended; on this indearing subject will I perpetually dwell in my private meditations, and in my public instructions of this capital article of the christian faith: I will not only be not ashamed, but I will boast, I will triumph, and exult, and glory in it, and in nothing beyond or besides it; the expression comes near to another of this same apostle's, Philip. iii. 8, 9, 10, 11. He adds, *by whom*, or rather as you have it on the margin of your Bibles, *whereby*, by the doctrine of the cross, *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

The world, and all that is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, its uncertain, short lived and temporary

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pleasures,

pleasures, its riches, its honours; are rendered of poor and contemptible account in my eye: as a creature born for immortality I have got my eye fixed upon a happiness in the favour of God thro' Christ's mediation, durable as my own being, and I am crucified unto the world, that is, I am by the victorious power of that grace which was purchased by this sacrifice of the cross, become insensible and dead as it were to the vanities of this world and the stinging pleasures of sin. Since therefore the cross of Christ, that is, The sufferings of our Redeemer, are of so great efficacy and power as to be able to free us from the guilt and punishment of sin, as well as its power and dominion, to raise more affections from earth to heaven, to renew our sinful and corrupt natures, and make us new creatures: is there any thing we should value ourselves upon in comparison of the privilege of being made a partaker of the merits of these sufferings, in comparison of the mercies we enjoy by the means of this humble but admirable dispensation? Let others form to themselves what schemes of happiness, and pride themselves in what distinctions and what pre-eminences they please; but God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world.

You see there was some need for dwelling so long upon the connexion, and general meaning of the words for preventing mistakes about them: what I farther propose from these is briefly to shew. 1. That it is unworthy of a christian to glory in any temporal and worldly advantage
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whatsoever, and, 2. It highly becomes us and only sets us, to glory in the cross of Christ; where I shall take occasion to show the indispensable necessity we are under to glory in the cross of Christ; and close with some application.

I. That it is unworthy of a christian to glory, to boast in any temporal or worldly advantages whatsoever they may be. The thinking part of the heathens have acknowledged, as well as the gospel-revelation teaches us, in every line of our Bible, That mankind are on this earth in a state of discipline and trial, passing on as fast as the wings of time can carry us thro' things temporal to an eternal and unalterably fixed state of happiness or misery; and that nothing therefore can be reckoned good here, any otherwise than it prepares and fits us for a happy eternity, nor does any thing deserve the name of bad to us in this life any farther than it indisposes and unfits us for an eternal happiness; and yet this great truth, which is so clearly the voice of reason and revelation, is apt to be overlooked even by the best on earth, in that judgment they pass upon the different states of temporal adversity and prosperity. To bear the cross of Christ, if I may so speak, or to be in an adverse and suffering condition, we dread and shun the very prospect of it at a distance; we have such apprehensions and suspicions of the dangers, the temptations and difficulties attending it: and yet it is certain, that the temptations and evils of prosperity are infinitely more fatal and mischievous than even those of the most suffering lot; and in nothing more than this, that prosperity

swells the mind with pride, vanity and boasting, renders us secure and careless, banishes from our thoughts a lively sense of religion, and of our dependence upon God. Even holy David, (Psal. xxx. 6, 7, 8.) in his prosperity said, *I shall not be moved: my mountain stands strong.* So hard a thing is it to use the good things of this world without overvaluing them, without having our minds unduly elated and swelled with them. They may indeed be a part, and but a small part, of our happiness in this transitory scene of life, provided we always retain in our minds the apostle's direction concerning them, 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31. These worldly advantages, these honours, these pleasures, these profits, whatever they be, are of an uncertain continuance, and may in a little time slip away from us; to be sure we shall in a little time slip away from them, and leave them to others behind us, and therefore why should we rest in them? Why should we boast of them? Why should we feed and raise not only our appetites, but our desires, our pride also, by means of them? The doctrine of the cross of Christ, and particularly his crucifixion seems to have been so contrived by the wisdom of God, as effectually to beat down any undue boasting or glorying in any thing that is temporal. The manner of its progress, the temporal meanness of those who first embraced and published it, the self-denied life, and ignominious death of its great Founder Jesus Christ, all conspire to stain the pride of all flesh, and to confound their boasting and glorying in any temporal advantage whatsoever, as
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the apostle well reasons to this purpose, 1 Cor. i. 26.

And indeed, my christian friends, it is enough to disparage all the fine shews and appearances of this life; and to render us indifferent to all the glaring and deceitful charms of it, if we do but attentively consider that great instance of suffering, greatness, and goodness, on which our faith and devotion ought this day to be employed. In Christ crucified we not only see the hand-writing of ordinances, Col. ii. 14. That is, the ceremonial observances of the laws of Moses blotted out, and sullied, and defaced, and nailed by Christ to his cross; but we see all the glories of this transient world crucified with him, when he who was Lord of all was lifted up on an infamous cross to expire in infinite agonies, and under infinite reproaches and shame. He did there as it were crucify the world, eclipse its lustre, and destroy the power of all its empty vanities: behold then our great high-Priest offering up the great sacrifice required for the redemption of the souls of men, pouring out his blood and thereby making atonement for the sins of the world! Behold him, I say, with the eye of faith, and you will acknowledge that tho' there was never any spectacle so sad, yet never was there any ever so glorious, or so worthy of being admired by men and angels! He was stript naked of all outward comforts and support, he had bitter gall given him for meat, and vinegar for drink when he cried, *I thirst!* And yet even in this depth of his humiliation, if we consider the mighty work he was accomplishing, we can-

not but sincerely despise all the vain pomps of life, in comparison of the splendor and usefulness of his sufferings; for then, even then while he hung upon the cross, he was the great Captain of our salvation, fighting our battles, subduing our enemies, leading captivity captive, spoiling the principalities and powers of darkness, making a shew of them openly and triumphing over them, Eph. iv. 8. and Col. ii. 15. Then was he purchasing gifts for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them on earth, in the ordinances of his worship and service, and that God the Lord might dwell with them for ever, and they with him, in a kingdom that cannot be moved or shaken. Then was he ransoming millions of all tongues, languages, and nations, from the jaws of the destroyer, from hell, and raising them up to sit with him in heavenly places: Then was he vanquishing death by his own death, and taking away its sting; then was he opening for us a gate to life and immortality, then was he disarming satan of his power, and hell of its terrors, and procuring for us his holy Spirit to renew us again unto the beauty of holiness, and to enable us to withstand the temptations of sense, and the fears of the world, and the wiles of the devil.

Surely the vain glories of this world, when compared with these real triumphs of the cross of Christ, must lose all their force and influence, and grow flat and comparatively insignificant in the eyes of christians that are so indeed, that are of the spirit and temper of our good apostle. Can we look up to him that was pierced, see him stretched

stretched on his cross, enduring the pain, despising the shame of it, for the joy that was set before him of bringing glory to God in the highest; on earth peace and good will to men; and not look down with neglect and contempt on that scene of sin and vanity, and folly which occasioned these sufferings.

Is it possible for the wise man now to glory in his wisdom, or the rich man in his uncertain gain, or the strong man in his feeble and soon subdued strength? I may borrow the apostle's language, and say, (1 Cor. v. 6.) *Beloved, this sort of glorying is not good. God forbid that we should glory in them; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath been made a partaker of the saving benefits of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might deliver us from this present evil world; That is, on purpose that he might free us from the enchanting power of all its empty delights, its vain allurements and perishing enjoyments. These he taught us by his doctrine, and by his example, by his life, and by his death, to undervalue, he chose to be without them, and the perfection of his exalted purity consisted in overlooking and despising them; God forbid then that we therefore, who profess to be his followers, should degenerate so far from the footsteps of our great leader, as to glory in them, highly admire them, greatly enjoy them, or eagerly pursue them. But this leads me, 2. To shew that it highly becomes us to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

II. *The cross of Christ as I observed before,*

is that doctrine of christianity to which all the other doctrines of the gospel refer, and from which they derive all their efficacy and influence they have towards reconciling the Majesty of heaven to sinners of mankind, and towards purging our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God; and therefore in that single article they are all of them often summed up and comprised. *We preach Christ crucified*, 1 Cor. i. 23. As if that and that alone were the subject of all he wrote, and of all he spoke; and again, 1 Cor. ii. 2. *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified*. As if that were the great point of saving knowledge to which those who learn, or who teach the religion of Christ should altogether apply themselves. It is to this that the sacrifices, rites and ceremonies of the law refer; this the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament do all centre in: This the two great ordinances of the New Testament do exhibit and commemorate. We are baptized into the death of Christ; the baptismal water has all its efficacy from the blood and death of Christ. In the Lord's supper we shew forth his death till he come, and feast upon the sacrifice he offered upon the cross, and thereby have communion with him. The bread which we bless, and break, and eat, is the communion of the body of Christ; and the cup of blessing which we bless, and drink all of, is the communion of the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of sins: And therefore ought we to rejoice and glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. To this article of our faith indeed the enemies

mies of the gospel have in all ages taken the greatest exception. The mean outward form of our Saviour, especially his sufferings and death, were the great stumbling-block to Jews and Gentiles in the early ages of the gospel: But did the first publishers of the gospel disemble the scandal of the cross because they were offended at it? No, they boasted of it, insisted on it in all their applications to the unbelieving Jews and the prejudiced Gentiles; and omitted no occasion of mentioning to them how Pilate and Herod, Jews and Gentiles confirmed the death of that holy and just One whom they crucified, as an high reproach and shame to his murderers indeed, but none at all to his disciples and followers. The first preachers of our faith must in this case be our pattern with regard to all the vanity and offence and proud insults of blasphemers, of the atheist and the infidel in our day, and against all the mischievous opinions of some deceived and deceiving christians, who vilify the cross of Christ, and despise the doctrine of it by disclaiming the satisfaction he thereon offered to the justice of God in the room and stead of sinners of mankind.

But to insist on this would open too large a field of matter to me at present; all I shall observe further on this head shall be, that the scriptures of truth represent all mankind antecedent to their redemption by the cross of Christ, in a state of rebellion, enmity and sin against God, Rom. v. 8, 19. and that the means by which we are delivered from this state of sin, of degeneracy and misery, are the incarnation, death and sufferings

ferings of the Son of God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. The meaning of which can be nothing less than this, 'That when men by their apostacy from and rebellion against God, had put themselves out of a state of favour with him, into a state of enmity to him, being exposed to his wrath, our blessed Redeemer by taking on him our nature, and the punishment of death due to our sins, and by suffering it on the cross in our stead, has made that satisfaction for the sins of the world, that atonement which the justice, the wisdom and goodness of God was pleased freely to appoint, and freely to accept in the room and stead of all who shall fly for shelter to this hope set before them; who, prodigal-like, weary and heavy laden with their past sins, shall arise and return to their Father in heaven, imploring the benefit of this sacrifice and atonement for the remission of sins that are past, and the powerful aids of his holy Spirit to renew their sinful natures, to strengthen their sincere resolutions, to guard them from the snares of their spiritual enemies; in that course of purity of heart and life, which now they look upon to be the alone dignity and happiness of their immortal natures, in the words of John, Chap. iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life.* The Father of mercies hath no pleasure in our destruction. *Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel,* Ezek. xxxiii. 11.?

It is sin only that God hates, and because of it he is forced to inflict any severe punishment upon

upon his creatures: the scriptures always represent him as doing it with greater reluctance than the most merciful and tender father on earth punishes the disobedience of his most beloved child, Hos. xi. 8. Nay, if it be any way possible to maintain the authority of his government, and vindicate the honour of his laws without the punishment and destruction of the offender; his bowels of mercy, which are over all his other works, manifests his pity and forbearance.

This, my dear friends, the cross of Christ effectually did; our blessed Redeemer, by his obedience and suffering in our nature, in our stead, and in our behalf: has magnified his Father's law and made it honourable, has vindicated in the most glorious manner the honour and authority of God, satisfied justice, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and has secured to every penitent relenting offender that is become willing to lay down the weapons of its rebellion, and to return to its duty, to its offended Father in heaven, a free pardon and remission of sin consistent with the honour of the divine law, and the justice and wisdom of the Lawgiver.

This is that wonderful conjunction of justice and mercy, which the angels desire to look into, which angels and men must for ever adore, but can never sufficiently praise and celebrate. In this dispensation mercy and truth meet each other, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Here while the believing penitent is pardoned, the severest punishment is inflicted on sin, in the person of his surety; upon the greatest, the best

best, the most innocent person that ever died in the world, voluntarily assuming the body prepared for him, and in that body undergoing these sufferings on the cross for us, that was the just desert of our sins. A lively memorial of these sufferings of Christ our Surety is to be placed before your eyes this day in the sacrament of the supper; most lively descriptions of which are given as well in the prophets predictions of his passion, as in the evangelists account of its accomplishment: and all are convincing demonstrations as well of God's irreconcilable hatred against sin, as of his infinite love and pity to sinners of mankind, and how very consistent with the sacred and venerable authority of his laws, and the unspotted purity and righteousness of his own nature? It is thus he has granted pardon to the penitent believer in Jesus, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Isa. liii. 3--7. And the accounts the evangelist gives us of the accomplishment of this prophecy, are such as ought to raise our admiration.. O may God pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on us, that there may be raised in us an eternal hatred of these sins which were the cause of such sufferings falling upon the innocent Lamb of God, and to look on him whom we have pierced and mourn; and be in bitterness for our sins, with as sincere and ingenuous a sorrow as a tender parent sorrows for an only son or a first-born; in that case our pardon and acceptance with the God whom we have offended is secured thro' the merits of these sufferings of our blessed Surety. I shall only add here that the account we have here of the cross of Christ ought

ought not only to raise in us the most terrible hatred at our sins, but also to fill our breasts with the most ardent love and thankfulness to God who gave, and to our Saviour who was contented to be given a ransom for our sakes, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God that we might never fall under the punishment due to our own sins; and to make us all cry out with the apostle in the text, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* The application of the whole yet remains.

1. From what we have heard, learn to have a deep sense of the wonderful mercy and goodness of God in contriving and appointing the redemption of mankind by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: when all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, when Jews and Gentiles were become guilty before God, and under a just sentence of condemnation; when the authority of God had been trampled upon, and the authority of his laws so diminished by sin, that it was not consistent with the divine holiness, or the wisdom of the supreme government of all things to remit the punishment due to sinful men, without some greater satisfaction than it was possible for men to make: that then the only begotten Son of God who was in the bosom of the Father, should be given up a sacrifice for our sins, should voluntarily condescend to assume our frail nature, and be contented to be clothed with misery and mortality. That from his glorious throne in the heavens, from being

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in the form of God he should stoop down to this earth, and submit to cruel sufferings and an ignominious death for the redemption of rebellious and apostate men; this is such an instance of tender mercy, as can never be embraced and entertained with sufficient joy and thankfulness. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his ways and his judgments past finding out.

2. From what you have heard, learn the exceeding evil and hatefulness of sin, and how necessary it is that you repent of it; and turn from it, and flee for refuge to the cross of Christ for pardon of it, and to the spirit of Christ to renew you again after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness: in order to your being welcome guests at Christ's table here, and in order to your complete enjoyment of God hereafter. God hath in this very description of mercy and pardon, so maintained and testified a greater and more irreconcilable hatred against sin, and shown it more in its odious and destructive nature, than if he had even immediately punished it by the destruction of the sinner: for if God when he was about to display the infinite abundance of his mercy in the forgiveness of sin, would not accept of a smaller ransom than the blood of his only begotten Son; what spark of hope can there be left to that unhappy man who yet continues in sin, that he shall escape the righteous vengeance of God? If such great and terrible afflictions fell upon the beloved Son of God for the sins of others, what dreadful vengeance must we expect, if neglecting this great salvation we fall

fall under the condemnation and punishment of our own sins. Awful are the expressions to this purpose, Hebrews x. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* And that our God, even the Father of mercies will be a consuming fire to the finally impenitent, who trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified an unholy thing: and have done despite to the Spirit of God, Heb. x. 26, 32. And that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, 2 Theff. i. 7, 8. when the finally impenitent will call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and cover them from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

The wrath of the Lamb is a very significant expression, signifying that our Redeemer himself who loved us, and gave himself for us, will yet finally have no pity on the impenitent; the very forgiveness purchased by the cross of Christ is obtained not at all for those who continue in sin, but for those who repent and believe the gospel: mercy itself, even this infinite fountain of mercy, the cross, the blood, the merits of Christ can do the impenitent no kindness; nay, so far from that, that on the contrary the neglecting to embrace the terms of the gospel, will infinitely add to our guilt, and increase our condemnation. O that all those would seriously con-

sider this, who take no thought about their souls, about repentance from their wicked works, about faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and that purity of heart and life without which none can see God; but continue in sin that grace may abound, whose condemnation the apostle says is most just, Rom. vi. 1, 2, 3.

3. From what you have heard, learn that the cross of Christ is to the truly penitent believer in Christ an encouragement to approach the throne of grace, in all the institutions of gospel worship with confidence and hope of acceptance, Eph. iii. 12. Rom. viii. 32. and v. 10. Heb. iv. 16. and iv. 5. *Let us then, in the words of the apostle, (Heb. x. 22.) draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; then let us go unto the altar of God, unto God our exceeding joy.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

Thanksgiving after the Holy Supper.

Newbills, July 20, 1736.

Pfalm xcvi. 10.

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.

THIS psalm begins with a very awful account of the supreme majesty of the great God, and the equity and justice of his government of the world, in a set of images most affecting in themselves, and which for certain must have been exceedingly moving and sensible to the Jewish church, who had so many opportunities to hear of the glorious and at that time late manifestations which God made of his eternal power and terrible majesty at Sinai, of the pillar of cloud and fire, which accompanied their trials thro' the wilderness, and that august cloud of glory which covered the mercy-seat in our psalmist's days, as a sensible evidence of the presence of God there. The description is carried down to the 7th verse, and from that to the 9th verse our psalmist expatiates, on the one hand, on the wild folly and madness of those who set themselves in opposition to this high and mighty one, and the certain misery and destruction such must plunge themselves in: and on the other,

the sure and stable peace and happiness of the church and people of God who bear a covenant-relation to him. In the 9th verse such were his present impressions of the honour and majesty of the blessed God, that he again breaks forth, he cannot get off the subject, and proclaims the absolute sovereignty, the unlimited dominion and supremacy of this God over all the world, and over all that is called God; and from that to the end of the psalm, he addresseth himself to the church of God, and to each one who loves his holy name; and in the warmest manner recommends to them to maintain their allegiance and fidelity to him, and to rejoice in him as their portion: the first direction he gives them is in the 10 verse, *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*: which I have taken as the subject of this discourse. The great meaning and sense of the words is plain and obvious, and therefore I shall propose the particular heads of the explication, 1. I shall endeavour, as God enables me, to explain the character which is here given of the people of God, or such as are in a special relation to him; *Ye that love the Lord*. 2. I shall explain the duty prescribed in the text, as incumbent upon all that love the Lord. 3. I shall state the connexion betwixt these two, or shew the indispensable obligations that ly upon all such as love the Lord to hate evil: and conclude with some practical reflections.

I. I shall explain the character of those that are in covenant with God, as set forth by the psalmist in the text; *Ye that love the Lord*; and on this head it will be needful to enquire. 1. In general

general why love to God or any one single grace is given as their character; and, 2. More particularly to explain the nature of that love to God which will infer one's being of the number of the people of God.

1. There is nothing more familiar in scripture than to find the character of the people of God drawn from some one or other eminent grace wherewith they are endowed; for instance, by their love to God as in the text, in other places of scripture, by their fear of God, Psal. lxvi. 16. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* By their knowledge of God, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* By their faith in God, Isa. xxviii. 16. *behold I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be ashamed.* By their hope in God, Psal. cxlvii. 11. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.* At other times we find their character so expressed, as to comprehend all these in it, when they are called saints, holy ones, them that walk uprightly, and such like. And the reason of this seems to be, because such is the miserable circumstances of human nature in its fallen estate, and all men are by nature enemies to God, Rom. viii. 7. *the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* And from this enmity against God, this unwillingness and inability to be subject to the law of God, the fear or
love

love of God, faith or hope in him are dead, until the Spirit of God in a day of almighty power overcome and subdue this enmity, and by infusing a principle of spiritual life, it licenseth the mind to act love to God, faith, or hope, or fear, or any other exercise of grace, according to the different apprehensions and impressions which the renewed mind may have of God; or the various circumstances it may feel itself in, and therefore, when any one grace of the spirit is given as the character of the people of God, it is not to exclude all the other graces from entering their character; no, it is owing to this, that where one grace is really in exercise, it supposeth a principle of spiritual life in the mind, infallibly concludes a renewed estate, and that the holy spirit has begun a good work, who will also carry it on to the day of Christ; and will so inflame the vital principle which he has infused, that the mind shall act faith, and love, and hope, and fear, and joy, and sorrow, and produce the exercise of every other grace, according to the various circumstances one may be in, and the different views of God one may have. But I proceed to what lies more directly before us, namely,

To explain the nature of that love to God, which will infer one's being of the number of the people of God: where I shall consider the object of this love, the ground and foundation of it, or what it is that kindles it in the object which it fixeth upon, the principal act of it, and the effects which it naturally causeth.

1. As to the object of this love, *Ye that love the Lord*, the glorious Jehovah. While man maintained

maintained his integrity he had all confidence in his approaching God absolutely considered, and kept a familiar correspondence with God: but how soon he rebelled and fell into transgressions, that blessed fellowship was quite interrupted, and from a sense of his being exposed to the severe resentment of the wrath of the most High, he could entertain no milder apprehensions of God, but as an offended and irreconcilable enemy, as a faithful and impartial judge, who would for certain vindicate the authority of his own law, in the punishment of such a wilful transgressor thereof, and unworthy despiser of his goodness, and accordingly he ran from the presence of God; *because, says he, I was afraid and ashamed;* and hence it follows, that God absolutely considered, becomes altogether terrible to a guilty creature, and in such a state there is no hopes of pardon, no prospect of getting free from everlasting punishment; whatever some have indiscreetly said, that we are obliged, or that it is possible to love God tho' he should damn us, it cannot in reason be supposed but that one in such circumstances should say against the author of its torment, and do all the despite to him it can, and even wish tho' in vain, that he were not! This seems the necessary consequent of such a desperate state, and we find this exactly exemplified in the fallen angels, which are at present in this sad case, and is plainly intimated to us in the scriptures, by those expressions made use of to set forth the wretched state of those unhappy sinners of mankind who are now out of the reach of merey. They are represented as gnashing

infernal course

gnashing their teeth, and therefore the object of the people of God's love, is not God absolutely considered, but as exalted on a throne of grace, to whom there is access for sinners of mankind, in that new and living way which is consecrated by rending the vail of Christ's flesh, and who has set on foot a treaty of reconciliation betwixt himself and sinners, thro' the mediation of his own eternal Son, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation for sin, and who is our Advocate with the Father able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come to God thro' him: and to this purpose we find when Moses desired a discovery of the glory of God, God made such a discovery of himself as was suited to the present circumstances of mankind in a lapsed state. That tho' he would by no means clear the guilty, yet he had found a method of reconciliation, wherein, with the safety of his purity and holiness, he could proclaim himself to sinners, *The Lord God merciful and gracious.*

The revelation by Jesus Christ sets this matter still in a clearer light; the apostle calls the gospel eminently the ministry of reconciliation, and that God is proposed in it, *as in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.* Having stated the object of this love, I shall next enquire into the grounds of it, or, 2. What it is in this object that this love fixeth upon: The best way to know this will be to reflect a little upon the natural actings of our minds, and observe what it is in any object which excites our love; and we will find that our love to any object is founded upon a
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real or conceived value which we apprehend in that object, and in a connexion we conceive there is betwixt the enjoyment of that object and our own happiness, where either of these are wanting our love will be but cold and low, if we can at all be said to love such an object: and the reason is plain, because it produceth a secret shame in us, we reproach ourselves, and are shy to own an affection to any thing which is worthless and of no value; and on the other side, however valuable any thing may be in itself, yet if we do not feel an uneasiness in the want of it, but propose happiness enough to ourselves without it, we will stand very indifferently and coolly affected towards it: now if we apply this to the object of love spoken of in the text, the blessed God in himself is valuable without all parallel, the most excellent and amiable being, infinitely great and good, glorious in himself, in all his perfections, counsels, ways, and works; an al- sufficient, self-sufficient Being, the almighty, eternal, unchangeable Jehovah, the only true God, glorious in holiness and full of compassions; and on these accounts deserves our highest value and esteem, and the preference to any thing else. If we further view this adorable object in the connexion there is betwixt our happiness and the enjoyment of him: he is surely the alone object suited to answer the unbounded cravings of an immortal soul. In his favour is life, and our happiness can only be rated by an interest in his loving kindness. What can we want, or what would we have that deserves the name of good, that is not to be found with him, and in the promises

mises of the covenant? sure the soul that has this God for their reconciled God and portion through Christ may say, even in the want of all things else, they have enough and need no more: and ~~on the other hand~~, one who is in a state of distance and estrangement from ~~their~~ God, is but poorly provided for happiness, tho' possessed of the gain of the whole creation without him.

These two things inseparably are the ground of this love, and our love to God fixes upon both; and it is a piece of speculation rather too refined to be put in practice, or apt to disquiet and torment the minds of men, as well as idle and useless in itself, to talk of loving God for himself, abstracting from the consideration of our happiness its being only to be found in him: and it seems to be of dangerous consequence to brand the loving of God with this view, as mercenary and unacceptable, at least our gracious God who knows our frame best requires no such thing at our hands; on the contrary we find that a belief that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, is joined with a belief of what he is in himself, as an equal motive to excite us to come to him, which in the language of scripture comprehends our love, fear, faith, and all the other branches of the christian disposition, Heb. ii. 8. Besides that there is an admirable subserviency in both these views of God, for all the purposes of our loving him, and every other part of religion that we cannot destroy any one of them without harm to practical godliness. The abstract consideration of the awful majesty and perfecti-

ons of the glorious God is apt to sink and discourage sinful creatures, if they had not the rich communications of the divine pity and favour to encourage them to apply to him, and to encourage our expectations of good from him; and on the other hand, notwithstanding all the merciful condescensions of divine grace and bounty to the dust of his footstool, a sense of his glorious perfections and excellency, humbles the pride of man, inspires with high and honourable apprehensions of him, makes them lay themselves humbly in the dust before him, and worship and serve him, under a sense of their distance and unworthiness in his sight. This might be largely confirmed by instances taken from scripture saints, did your time permit, but I proceed to enquire,

3. Into the principal acts of this love, and 'tis certain love must act differently according to the different views which the mind takes of the object upon which the love is fixed. Love will act in a way of strong desire to have the possession and enjoyment of the object beloved; when considered on the other hand as actually in possession, love will act in a way of delight and complacency. Thus while an interest in God thro' Christ is doubtful, and the contrary feared, and at the same time the mind is under a thorough and lasting conviction, that God alone is a satisfying portion, and tho' it had all the world besides without him it would be miserable: this draws out the soul to earnest desires to have God for his reconciled Father and friend in Christ, and while many are saying who will shew us any

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good, that soul's highest desire is, Lord, lift on me the light of thy countenance, there is none in heaven or earth I desire beside thee, O that I knew where I might find him. The soul in this case expresses its love by thirst for God, even the living God, it longs and cries and mourns in his sight as desolate and wanting all things, tho' it receive some token for good, some evidence of an interest in him thro' Christ. On the other hand, when the Spirit of God shines upon his own work in the soul, so as the renewed mind can lay claim to God as his God, love acts in a way of delight and complacency, then its meditation of him is eminently sweet, then heart and lips are opened and enlarged in praising him who has given them counsel to seek their happiness where only it is to be found, then it can enjoy God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom it has received the atonement, and go to God as its exceeding joy, and say in the language of the psalmist, with a flowing delight and complacency of soul, Psal. xvi. 5, 6, 7. *The Lord is the portion of my cup and my inheritance, thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. Thou hast put gladness in my heart: I will lay me down and take quiet rest, because thou O Lord sustaineest me.* This is love in its most raised and exalted stains; this is as it were a foretaste, or rather the beginnings of that eternal rest and consolation which remains for the people of God. Only to prevent mistakes here, you should observe that tho' either of these are genuine acts of love to God, yet love to God is most

most frequently and habitually expressed in a way of thirsting, and panting, and longing desires, by believers on this side heaven. Few of them that love the Lord are got above all their doubts and fears, and the imperfection of the new nature, the remains of a body of death, the trial of their grace, the defects of their obedience, and many times the wrong turn and bent of their natural tempers and conditions are too certain causes of this: and this accords with the experience of the lovers of God in the sacred records, and in all ages. But I shall conclude this head by mentioning some of the native effects of real love to God, which flow from this passion in some measure, where even 'tis found, and are inseparable from it, and what you may make use of either as marks to try the soundness and truth of the professions of love to God you have made on this occasion, or as instructive directions to inform you how you ought to carry it towards God in your whole course, in consequence of the mighty obligations you brought yourselves under yesterday in eating the sacramental bread and drinking the sacramental cup.

1. Love to God will naturally transform the mind in some measure into the divine likeness and image; love is of an assimilating nature, and makes every one take some measures of likeness from the person whom he loves. It is a stated principle with all that love the Lord, that holiness is the foundation of all happiness that is real or lasting, and the more holy, ~~that is,~~ the more like to God, who is peculiarly glorious in this perfection, the more happy he would be; this

puts him upon considering the disorder sin has introduced into the human nature, and upon a diligent use of all the means of grace for getting these disorders rectified, and every high thought and imagination brought down, every boisterous passion and criminal inclination mortified, and to have the whole man renewed after the image of God, and formed into a likeness and conformity to the divine nature.

2. Where this is once fixed as the general and steady aim of the soul, the next effect which love to God will cause is a conscientious regard to the whole of the divine commands. Among men it passes for a high stain of impudence and dissingenuity for one to make great professions of love to another whom notwithstanding he is every day deliberately offending, and it is justly reckoned so, because it is the very natural effect of love, if it is sincere, to dispose one to avoid any thing they know is displeasing and disagreeable to the other in all these instances wherein he is pleased to make it known: and therefore what can be said of pretensions to love God if we are either careless or negligent in doing his will, especially if we can allow ourselves in the stated contempt and disregard of what he commands? Our Lord seems plainly to have determined this matter, John xv. 21. *If any man love me he will keep my words, but he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.*

3. Another effect the love of God causeth is, an affectionate liking and high esteem of all the divine institutions of worship, such as prayer, praise, the Lord's day, the hearing and reading his

his word, the gospel sacraments; and the reason is because these are the appointed means of our holding communion and maintaining a correspondence with the great object of our love. Real love will make those who love another fond of frequent opportunities of corresponding with one another at a distance in all the practicable ways of doing it, and this makes the lover of God love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwells; to esteem the Lord's day as the holy of the Lord, honourable; he redeems his time, and carefully lays it out in an attendance upon the institutions of divine worship, and he looks on the time spent in these as the golden spots of it; to see the power and the glory of God in the sanctuary, or in the more secret duties of appointed worship is his highest ambition, and most pleasant gratification in life, and the end he proposes to himself is to get such renewed discoveries of the object of his love as may engage him more strongly to follow on to know and serve him, and to receive from God such communications of his Spirit and grace as may enable him to run with chearfulness in the ways of his commandments.

4. Another necessary effect of the love of God is a concern for the interest of God in the world and a zeal for advancing his honour and glory among men. It is a common effect of love among men for one to be seriously affected to see any thing done to the prejudice of his friends interest, or to hear evil spoken of him, and to do all in his power to support and promote his friends interest in his absence: so where the love of God

takes place it will produce a sad regret and grief of mind to see the honour of God slighted and trampled upon by profane sinners. *Rivers of tears run down mine eyes*, says a lover of God (the royal psalmist) *because the wicked do not keep thy law*. So on the other hand, there is no greater occasion of joy in the world to a zealous lover of the Lord than to observe sinners converted, subjects brought into the kingdom of grace, or himself made active in serving the cause of God and promoting his honour in the station wherein providence has placed him, and to bear a very particular affection and regard to all who bear the image of God and are engaged in the service of God, and are seriously concerned to advance his honour as they have opportunity and ability.

5. Finally, another effect the love of God causeth (where it is real) is strong desires after the nearest and most complete enjoyment of God the object of their love. Those who heartily love one another, are in pain to be kept at a distance from one another; they chuse to be much together, and if possible never to part; and this agrees exactly with the experience of the lovers of God; and with the common experience of the generation of the righteous in all ages; who grone while in this tabernacle, being burdened with many sins, and many sorrows, and many fears, and long for the dawn of that glorious day when shadows shall flee away, when sin and satan and temptation, shall have no more access to defile or grieve them, when they shall put on perfection and see the object of their love face to face, without

without any more interruptions of their love to him or of his gracious countenance towards them. I now proceed to the second general Head proposed, namely,

II. To explain the duty incumbent upon the sincere lovers of God; *hate evil*, that is, Sin: and upon this head, I shall shew, 1. That sin is the proper object of our most intense hatred. 2. I shall enquire what is included in this hatred of sin, or how this hatred at sin discovers itself in them that love the Lord.

1. I shall shew that sin is the proper object of our most intense hatred; this will be evident if we consider the nature of this passion, and what it is that raiseth it in the minds of men: hatred is a passion directly opposite to love, and ariseth from opposite causes, namely, a real or fancied baseness and vileness we apprehend to be in any object; or from a tendency we conceive it has to make us miserable; either of these will naturally kindle our aversion and abhorrence, but both together raiseth the most intense and warm hatred we are capable of. Now if we consider sin in itself or in its tendency to make us miserable, we will find it an object most worthy of our keenest abhorrence and opposition. In itself sin is the abominable thing which God hates and lothes; he is of purer eyes than look on it without abhorrence and detestation; it is contrary to his nature; a violation of his authority and law; a contempt of his goodness and a defiance of his displeasure; it is a trampling under foot the blood of the covenant, and doing what in us lies to frustrate the merciful designs of the death of Christ; it is

a doing despite to the spirit of God, and a resisting his motions; it debases our reasonable natures beneath the beasts that perish, and is represented in scripture by most odious metaphors such as a leprosy, a loathsome disease, the most miserable slavery and bondage. If we view it in its tendency to our misery, it makes us completely miserable; when indulged it is apt to plunge us into all possible distresses for this and the world to come. One sinner wastes his health, another brings himself to a piece of bread, another comes to a shameful and untimely end: all kinds of sin throws a blemish upon one's reputation, disturbs the peace and order of society; every sin ruffles and discomposes the peace of the mind, and fills it with shame and horror, where many times the fearful forebodings of an insupportable load of misery is begun even in this world; or tho' the sinner should escape without this hell upon earth, yet at the long run, without thorough repentance and application to the blood of atonement, it is sure to sink the sinner into the lowest hell; that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; for the wages of sin is death, and therefore what can be the proper object of our outmost abhorrence and aversion, if sin is not. But I proceed,

2. To shew how this hatred acts and exerts itself against sin in all them that love the Lord; which you may also use as marks or directions.

1. This aversion to sin that is found in them that love the Lord, is spread thro' all the powers of the mind, and acts against all and every sin. There are but few sinners so notoriously abandoned,

done, whose consciences are seared to that degree in a course of sin, as to have their reason and judgment deliberately approving them in their wicked practice, or who are got above all remorse and fear: no, the reason and common sense of mankind does suggest a great deal against sin, if sinners could be prevailed upon to listen to it; there can be no clearer proof of this than that however far one may be gone into the love and practice of any particular vice, yet another vice which he sees another wallowing in, and which he himself is not addicted to raises his indignation, and appears ugly and abominable to him, and he will exclaim vehemently against it, and just so will that other person cry out against the vice which another is in love with, if he does not relish it himself; nay, a man's own reason condemns those very vices which he himself is a slave to, and it is apt to kindle his abhorrence when he sees another dealing in them. It is matter of daily observation, and invincibly confirms this truth, to see parents severely chastising and abhorring in their children those very sins which they can indulge themselves freely in; nor are there any sinners, I am apt to think, who, sooner or later, in some degree, do not feel the throwes and stings of an accusing conscience; but the case is, the will and affections of sinners are so deeply engaged on the side of sin, their affections are so plunged in brutal gratifications, as not to savour the things of God, so that whatever faint resistance reason and conscience may make against sin, yet the will is so biased by the carnal affections, and so enslaved to impure lusts,

lusts, and the sinner so in love with his chains, that sin reigns and predominates; but then it is otherwise with them whose hearts have been circumcised to love the Lord God, who have been humbled thoroughly under a conviction of the exceeding evil of sin, the obstinacy of whose wills have been brought down and bended another way, in a day of almighty power, whose affections have been disentangled from the bondage of these cruel tyrants, and determined and enabled to set them on things above, and against every thing contrary to the holy nature and law of God, to that degree that every one, small and great, that loves the Lord, can say in some measure with the apostle, *I delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man*: and in so much as he delights in the law of the Lord, in so much must he abhor sin of all kinds, which is the breach and contempt of it; even those sins that are dear to him as a right hand he cuts off, and as a right eye he pulls out, and watches against those sins which have his constitution, or his circumstances in this world, or any other thing which is valuable in its own room, on their side, and are ready most easily to beset him. Ps. xviii. 22: *I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.*

2. This hatred against sin discovers itself in all the lovers of God by a conscientious and steady improvement of all the means of grace which God has appointed for the mortification of sin: the lover of God is sadly sensible that evil is still present with him, and this puts him to prayer, meditation, watchfulness, and all the other appointed

pointed means for getting it more and more subdued; he calls in the aids and influences of the divine Spirit, from a conviction of his own inability and insufficiency for this purpose; he maintains a constant jealousy over heart and life, is shy and fearful, weighs and considers thoughts, words and actions; observes the first appearances of temptations, when assaulted takes to him the armour of God and makes resistance, and tho' he should be worsted in some particular instances, his hatred at sin does not abate, Rom. v. 17. *The evil that I hate that I do.* Most like an enraged enemy, who, tho' overcome for once, is so far from dropping the quarrel that he is yet more exasperated, and makes more diligent preparation for a new onset; in like manner the lover of God humbles himself deeply in the sight of God on the account of sin that dwells in him, implores further measures of the sanctifying and sin-mortifying grace of the holy Spirit that he may be able to stand out against after temptations, more to the honour of God and his own comfort.

3. This hatred against sin never ceaseth till it obtains the death of sin; nothing can reconcile the love of God to sin; all the baits and allurements it can possibly put on never move him, it is the utter extirpation of it he wants or nothing will satisfy him, and therefore he continues to wrestle and combat with it, and looks on himself while in the world as in the land of his enemies, and longs for the day of complete redemption, and an admittance into that quiet habitation where the weary are at rest; and in the mean time, while the Lord delays his coming, frequently

frequently vents the burden of his soul in the warm language of the apostle, Rom. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I proceed to the third general head :

III. To state the connexion betwixt the character in the text and the duty prescribed.

1. I might state this connexion from the obligations of duty. All mankind are under the strongest obligations of duty to love the Lord and hate evil; the very relation there is between an infinitely holy Creator and a reasonable creature founds an eternal and unalterable obligation upon every such creature to hate sin and avoid what may be displeasing in his sight : this obligation grows upon us from the care and goodness of divine providence. Christianity in general, and the obligations of baptism, add more force to the ties of creation and daily providence; but the obligation is infinitely increased upon the lovers of God who are not mere nominal christians, but have strengthened every other obligation by a solemn surrender of themselves to God in Christ in the gospel method at their conversion, when the Spirit of God opened their eyes to see the evil of sin, the dishonour it does to God, and the misery it involves the sinner in. How many vows and engagements against sin have they brought themselves under in secret before God, when their iniquities compassed them about? How many resolutions have they formed to renounce and forsake it; that God alone

alone should be their portion and happiness, and the supreme object of their love and delight; and that all his enemies should be their enemies, to which none but God and their own consciences have been privy, and which they renewed in the solemn transaction of yesterday at the Lord's table, and on many former occasions? And therefore, *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*: for are you not of all persons in the world the most strongly bound to do so in duty, your own selves being judges?

2. I might reason this connexion from the obligations of interest. Interest is a strong principle of action among mankind; self-preservation, and a thirst after happiness is deeply rooted in human nature, and will put men upon very eager and warm pursuits of what they apprehend connected with their interest. When men fondly conceive their chief happiness to lie in the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind, no wonder if they prosecute their sinful courses with the utmost vigour; but the very light of nature directs men to higher pursuits, and a more noble and lasting happiness: the christian revelation has brought life and immortality to a clear light and ascertains all that sows to the flesh, that of the flesh they shall reap corruption; but where the Spirit of God has been savingly enlightening the mind, which is the case with all they that love God, their chief happiness is discovered to them to be in the favour of God, in peace with him, thro' Jesus, and the joyful sense of it in communion with God and conformity to him, and the eternal enjoyment

joyment of him in a better state. But then how cross and prejudicial to such an interest is sin? Why, sin separates betwixt God and the soul, causes a painful sense of guilt, interrupts his intercourse with heaven, provokes the Spirit of God to withhold his influences, causeth sore trouble by reason of the hidings of God's countenance, hinders his progress in holiness, and lays under great indisposition and unpreparedness for the heavenly inheritance, Wherefore *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*: for of all persons you are most obliged to do so by all the ties of interest.

3. I might illustrate this connexion from the obligations of gratitude. Ingratitude is a most monstrous and shocking deformity in human nature; and this is the common sentiments of mankind about it, and it is as plain that all men are under the most inviolable obligations of gratitude to the great Creator for their being, preservation, and every merciful circumstance in their lot. A revelation of the mind and will of God to men, adds to the other obligations of gratitude which are still the stronger, in proportion to the greatness of the necessity there was for such a revelation. But then the obligations of gratitude grow infinitely upon the lovers of God, who love him because he first loved them; they were the objects of divine love from all eternity; God the Father pitied the sad misery he foresaw sin would plunge them in, he entertained thoughts of mercy towards them, and actually parted with the Son of his own bosom to rescue them from the melancholy bondage and
fearful

fearful punishment of sin : the delights of God the Son were also with them from eternity ; he chearfully undertook their recovery, and delighted to do his Father's will, tho' it was to offer himself a sacrifice to the justice of God in their stead. The holy Ghost applies the promised redemption to them, and has actually given them counsel to set their affections on the proper object, has begun their deliverance from sin in regeneration, and in carrying it on in their gradual sanctification, while others, who perhaps enjoy more external advantages than they, are suffered to lie securely in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity ; now does sin as far as possible counteract all these gracious purposes of redeeming-love. Then ye that love the Lord, hate evil, otherwise you are the most monstrously ingrate persons in the universe.

I should now make some practical improvement of the whole, but as I have endeavoured to run the whole discourse in as practical a strain as possible, I shall detain you the less here : and,

1. I would drop a sentence or two in an address to you that love the Lord, who have tasted that he is gracious, and have had serious and affecting convictions and impressions of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and of the exceeding evil and sinfulness of sin, and have felt the constraints of the love of God in Christ, so as to make choice of him as your Father and portion, and to make the entire dedication of your all to him through Jesus, with a full resolution to abandon and hate sin, the only thing that separates betwixt this holy One and the work of his

own hands. Though others are insensible of these things, though these live as without God in the world, though he is scarce in all their thoughts, which are swallowed up with sinful and vain imaginations and pursuits, yet ye are the salt of the earth. Let him not be for a day or an hour altogether out of your minds; but be still looking upwards and praying earnestly for the constant influences of the holy Spirit to conform us more and more to the love of God and the hatred of sin of all kinds: bless his holy name who has been pleased to make such clear and affecting discoveries of his good-will to men in the gospel, and in the dispensation of gospel-ordinances, wherein the glories of God's love in Christ to the rebellious children of men shine forth in the perfection of beauty. Praise him who sent the Spirit of his Son into thy mind to open thine eyes, and caused the light of his glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus, to shine into thy darkened mind, and thereby draw and allure thy soul from sin and vanity to himself, and while thou wast a stranger and enemy reconciled thee to himself thro' the death of his Son. Raise your voices on a day of thanksgiving after the holy supper in the praises of God, and cry for a breathing of the Spirit, that your hearts may be filled with the warmest impressions of that tender and unspeakable love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that looked upon thee with an eye of pity in thy low estate, and gave his only begotten Son to be thy Almighty Redeemer, to deliver thee from sin and wrath, and to raise thee up to a life of faith, and

love, and holiness, till thou arrive at the full stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus. Seek to attain and maintain a lively sense of the dying love of the dear Redeemer, who was loaded with sorrows and indignities, scoffs and reproaches, yea and submitted to bloody agonies and death to redeem thee from the power and punishment of sin. Believe it, christians, that God's design in all these gracious counsels and performances for thee was that thou mightest be holy and without blame before him in love, and therefore improve them into so many arguments to engage thy sincerest, warmest love, and universal obedience to that God who loved thee first, otherwise thou hadst never been in a capacity of loving him.

I shall only add further, that the more thou livest under the influence and in the meditation of the love of God to thee, the more chearful and willing will thy returns of duty be, and the greater abhorrence wilt thou have at sin, and despise and disdain the thoughts of turning his grace and goodness into lasciviousness.

I shall conclude this address in the language of the apostle Peter, *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance; forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ,*

as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.
 Pet. i. 13, &c.

2. I shall shut up all with a sentence or two to those whose characters are the reverse to that in the text, who are lovers of pleasures, lovers of sin and the world, more than lovers of God, who declare their enmity to him by living in the neglect and contempt of the institutions of his worship, in secret, in their families, and in public; whose whole temper and way declare an enmity to his justice and holiness, power and truth, and a contempt and flight of his favour and goodness, of his displeasure and hatred; whose practical language is, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Such had need to think seriously that there can be nothing more vile and monstrous than such a temper and course. Not to love, or to prefer sin to the infinitely glorious God, who is transcendently glorious in himself, and endearing in the riches of his mercy and grace, to hate and condemn the author of thy being, the fountain of all thy mercies, the God of all hope, who has done so much for thee, who never did thee wrong, but daily loads thee with his good benefits, and makes the freest tenders of his boundless love in Christ for all the purposes of thy eternal and spiritual happiness. Wilt thou not seek him and love him, because thou canst not like his favour or his service, and lovest thy lusts better, and doest not care to have any dealings with him, but to take thy own course. Think upon it seriously how you will be able to give an account to him another day for such a conduct, so
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absurd and abominable, think how provoking such a course must be to that holy and just One, who is angry with the wicked every day; think how odious and inexcusable thy guilt in such a case, and under the gospel, must be, and say what vengeance can be too heavy to repay it. Do you thus requite the Lord, foolish people and unwise; the Lord, who has born with you so long, the Lord, who still waits to be gracious, because he delights in mercy, and this day renews the free offers of peace and reconciliation through a Redeemer, to the chief of sinners within hearing. We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; may the Lord determine you by his grace to comply with the offers of his grace; for believe it, your hands will not be strong, nor will your hearts be able to endure, if he contend in judgment with you.

I conclude with the words of the apostle Jude, verse 20, &c.

But, ye beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, hating even the garment spotted with the flesh. Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X I V .

Communion-Evening, at Newhills.

August 7, 1765.

Rev. i. 5, 6.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

WHEN the prophet John is offering up his earnest prayers to the throne of grace in behalf of the churches of Christ in Asia, having but mentioned the dear name Jesus Christ, he kindles into a flame of love and devotion, and breaks forth like lightning into a high commendation of him and ascription of praise to him. *Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, &c.*

Your time will not admit that I should enter upon a particular illustration of all this commendatory character of the blessed Jesus, I must pass by what he says of his being the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of the earth, and shall only offer you a few thoughts,

First, Upon that part of the description which has the most endearing commendation in
it,

it, *Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood :*

Secondly Explain the doxology, *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

I. I return to the first of these, namely, the description of the blessed Jesus in these words, *Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood ;* where you will observe that his love is spoken of in general, and then a very signal instance of it is mentioned in particular.

1. His love is spoken of in general, *He loved us ;* where observe, 1. The peculiarity of his love ; he loved us the sons of men while the sinning angels were passed by, and left to all the consequences of their sin and rebellion ; this is particularly taken notice of in scripture, Heb. ii. 16. *He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.* His love is made up of pity and compassion to us the lowest order (for ought we know) of God's intelligent creatures, who had nothing to recommend us unto him any further than the misery which sinners involved in might move ; it was a peculiar favour to fallen man to become their Saviour, when the angels who left their first estate were cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness : here was riches of love as well as the most affecting instance of distinguishing favour and good will to us the sons of men ; and should put a special accent upon our ascriptions of praise to him. But, 2. Observe the earliness of his love, his thoughts and purposes were thoughts and purposes of love from all eternity. He loved us in this view before we had a being, and

and under the prospect of our fall and misery, and designed to advance the glory of his wisdom and holiness, but especially of his love and grace in bringing many sons and daughters from among the children of men to glory and eternal blessedness, out of the ruins of the fall; this is expressly told us, Prov. viii. 29, 30. There were early thoughts of love and kindness toward sinners of mankind before the world was made. He solaced himself in the prospect of what was to be done by him in time; he who was daily the delight of his Father had his delights with the sons of men; how hearty then ought our ascriptions of glory to be to him! 3. It was a free and transcendently generous love. The fall had impoverished us, and brought us into circumstances of the deepest misery, distress, and guilt, hence the apostle celebrates the freedom of the love of Christ, 2 Cor. viii. 9. But his love was not only free but transcendently so, generous beyond any instance of human love, and therefore compared to the love the Father bears to him, John xv. 9. The highest instance of generous love among men, and very rare instances are there of its rising so high, is for a man to lay down his life for his friend, but how transcendently free and heroic is the love of Jesus beyond that? Rom. v. 6, 8, 10. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly. For if when we were yet enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled*
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we shall be saved by his life. The warmest affection perhaps that human nature is acquainted with is that liking which a woman has to her sucking child, and even this strong instance of affection is represented, as falling below the love of Christ to the sons of men, Isa. xlix. 15, 16 *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.* And therefore, the scripture tired as it were seeking illustrations among men, to show the greatness of the love of Christ; tells us it passes knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. That is, It is without parallel and above our understanding, we cannot find it out to perfection, we know not the full dignity of his person, the greatness of his condescension and pity, and therefore cannot pretend to measure his love: only, he hath loved us, and so loved us as never any did, love is his name, and love is his memorial in the church for ever. And therefore most cordially and cheerfully, should every generation of men, every individual among the children of men say, To him be glory for ever and ever, Amen. But this leads me on to the second thing taken notice of in the text, namely,

2. One signal instance of the love of Christ here mentioned. He washed us from our sins in his own blood, I said this is one signal instance and a most endearing one it is, but still it is but one, and one too out of many, as well as strictly connected with every other instance of his pity; it is but a consequence of his early love when in
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the council of peace, he engaged to vail his glory, to assume the form of a servant, to make his soul an offering for sin that he might reconcile the honour of heaven with the happiness of fallen apostate man: and how chearfully did his love and pity move him to fulfill these engagements? In the fulness of time the word, the eternal, the uncreated word, and wisdom of the Father actually was made flesh, assumed the body prepared for him; his love really and indeed brought him from heaven to earth, humbled him to the state of an infant, laid him in a manger, wrapt him in swaddling clothes! Amazing love, condescension and good will of the Son of God, heir of all things, and whom all the angels of God worship, to consent to be thus abased for us; his love made him subject himself to a condition of life equally mean as his birth. The foxes had holes, the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his blessed head. His love to us made him patiently to bear hunger and thirst, poverty and want, and which is still more strange, the bitterest contradiction of sinners against himself; a traitor, a madman, a blasphemer, a deceiver, a confederate with the devil, a glutton, a drunkard, were the common titles of reproach cast on him by those very men with whom his delights had been, and whom he came to save. But the grand period, emphatically called the hour and power of darkness, was what he endured in the garden and on the cross, as if he had endured nothing till then, it is said he began to be sorrowful and very heavy, Matth. xiv. 27. to which the expression in my text

chiefly refers, his washing us from our sins in his own blood; or, his dying love washed us in blood, in his own blood! and from what? from our sins. It is for a solemn memorial of this dying love of Jesus, to be continued till time be no more, that the blessed sacrament of the supper was instituted by him, and whereof we have been partaking this day. Christ Jesus the Lord has been set forth in the ordinance as crucified before our eyes, shedding his blood to wash us, dying in our room and stead, dying under the imputation of our guilt, dying to give a proper satisfaction for our sins to the law and justice of God, dying to remove the distance, heal the breach that sin had put betwixt God and us, dying to bring God and the rebellious to dwell together, dying that we might never die, or rather agonize in eternal torments, dying that we might receive the redemption of sons, the gift of the Spirit, and become heirs of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

But more particularly, observe his love by thinking what an evil he had delivered us from in washing us from our sins in his own blood. Sin is the very worst of evils. Sin is a transgression of the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, and so it becomes a contempt of the highest authority, and a denial of the sovereignty of God over us, and the property and right he has in us, as well as a contradiction to his holiness and purity. Sin pours contempt upon all his goodness, and bids open defiance to his justice, power and wrath. Sin defaces the image of

of God that was stamp't upon the soul of man in his first creation, and debases our natures, and transforms us into the shameful likeness of the devil. Sin turns the heart away from God and all that is holy into an evil principle and habit of disobedience which becomes a dreadful source of disorder, guilt, fear, and shame, within us, as well as turns away God's gracious presence from us, and exposes us to the punishments threatened in his holy law against the transgressors of it.

How fatal again the consequences of sin? and who sees not the dreadful evil of it in the miseries and disorders that are introduced by it into the creation of God? Sin opens the floodgates of woe which let in all these calamities that have overflowed this lower world. The vanity, the sorrow, the suffering, the pain under which the whole creation groans, sickness of body, horror of conscience, death, and even hell, are the fruit of sin; all the evil we feel and all the evil we fear, is the wretched offspring of sin. Read the evil of sin, in these abodes of horror, these chains of darkness in which the angels who sinned are now confined to the judgment of the great day. Read the evil of sin in the horrors of Cain's guilty mind, when he cried out, *My punishment is greater than I can bear.* Read the evil of sin in the agonies of soul wherewith returning penitents are afflicted, Psal. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4. Consult your own feelings, christians, if ever your spirits were wounded and broken with a deep sense of the exceeding evil and dreadful demerit of sin, and you must say, A wounded

spirit is hard to bear; no sorrow like this exceeding evil from which your Redeemer came to deliver you. Think what his delivering us from this evil cost him. He washed us from our sins in his own blood; so detestable is sin in the eyes of the divine purity that God did not deem ~~think~~ it consistent with the honour of his government to pardon it without a sacrifice, and this must be the blood of his own Son, Isa. liii. 6. Hence he is called the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, John i. 29. How beautifully does the apostle describe this, Heb. x. 5, 7, 10. *Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. By the which will we are sanctified, thro' the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* A body, that is, a human nature was prepared for him that he might be our near kinsman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; a human nature liable to all sorts of penal evils, to poverty, reproach, hunger, weariness, grief, temptation, yea, and subject to death; and in that human nature he actually bore all these pains of body and agonies of mind from the immediate hand of heaven, from men on earth, and from the powers of darkness, all that cursed death which was the due desert of our sins. And O the bloody sweat caused by the violent conflicts of his innocent soul, the tears, the strong cries and prayers he uttered, the indignities and anguish of a most painful, and shameful and cursed

curled death upon the cross that he endured from the time he entered the garden of Gethsemane until he uttered the triumphant shout, *It is finished*, immediately before he bowed his blessed head and gave up the ghost. At that time the whole earth felt a confusion, as you read in the sacred history, the sun hid his face, the earth trembled, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and his very enemies were filled with amazement and relented, and even some of them said, This was the son of God.

All this he knew before hand he behoved to undergo, yet he never went back, yet his love to us was stronger than death, nay the very floods of divine wrath could not quench it. No, he willingly and patiently poured out the last drop of his own most precious blood for us, rather than we should become a sacrifice to the wrath of God for ever. What reason then have we at all times, especially in the evening of a communion Sabbath, when we have been commemorating the dying, the bleeding love of the dear Redeemer in the sacrament of the supper, to address him with hearts warmed with gratitude and humility, and the firmest resolutions of obedience, in the words of the text, *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* Which brings me to the second general head, namely,

II. To explain the doxology in the text, *to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* 1. Ascribe ye glory to this blessed Redeemer, do it with understanding, because he is possessed of every perfection and excellency that can possibly raise the esteem, the gratitude, and

praise of an intelligent being, especially of the sinful and fallen race of the children of men. How amiable are his personal excellencies as he is God? He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who made and upholds all things by the word of his power, and yet out of his abundant and free love to sinners of mankind, humbled himself, became man, dwelt in a human body, was not ashamed to call us brethren, and to be made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, the only thing which makes the human nature monstrous and deformed, but he knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, but was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, trampling upon the empty glory of this world to wean us from it, and gave us his example to learn us to aspire after true glory, honour and immortality. How kind and benevolent was the design of his coming into this world of sin and sorrow, not to condemn it, but that through him the world might be saved. How wise his precepts for this end, how familiar and engaging his example, how gentle and mild his government, how extensive the offers of his grace, and how gracious and condescending the terms of peace published in his name! How glorious is he in his lowest steps of humiliation, dying for men that had destroyed themselves, becoming their atonement, sacrifice and ransom, rescuing them from hell, raising their hopes as high as heaven.

Follow him by faith, Christians, from his cross on earth to his crown of glory in heaven,
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and think of him even there acting for our interest with a heart as tenderly affected to us as ever, still dispensing his heavenly gifts amongst the rebellious; heaven, and eternal glory itself is the preparation as well as the purchase of his death.

Think of these things, christians, and you will be convinced that at least you ought to ascribe glory to him, and you will condemn yourselves if you do not where praise is so justly due; and oh let none of us be longer ashamed of this heavenly exercise, this chearful work wherein the saints on earth and the redeemed on high will all bear us company; this we ought chearfully to ascribe to our Redeemer because it is the purchase of his blood, Rom. xiv. For this end he died and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living; and this dominion and sovereignty of his is confirmed by his God and Father, Phil. ii. 6. *God hath highly exalted him*; and at the same time enjoined us to confess that Jesus is the Lord to the glory of the Father. — But, O christians, let not this confession be merely verbal, let it be also punctual. In the days of his flesh he looked upon it as a piece of fair fashioned flattery and hypocrisy, and detested it to be called, Lord, Lord, without doing the things he commands, and so does he still; and therefore remember you fail entirely of acceptance in ascribing dominion to Jesus, if you consent not heartily to be under law to him. This day such of us as were at his table have professed subjection and sworn allegiance to him upon the sacred symbols of his broken body and shed

shed blood: and all of us, as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on a profession of him and obligation to his service. Obey him then with all the heart; take his yoke, for it is easy, and his burden for it is light. Be obedient to the laws of his kingdom; attend upon every appointed mean of his worship; pay an unreserved obedience to every known command, and let his love his dying love constrain you to live henceforth no more to yourselves, but to him who died for you and rose again, and is hastening to set his throne for judgment, where every one must give an account of the deeds done in the body.

It is added, thirdly, *for ever and ever*; to put us in mind how constant we ought to be in ascribing glory, and how chearful and steadfast in our allegiance and obedience to him, whose throne is for ever and ever. As his gifts and callings are without repentance, and endure for ever and ever, so ought our choice of him to be with a full purpose of heart to cleave to him in all weathers, so shall the ransomed of the Lord come to Sion with everlasting songs of praise in their mouths, and till that glorious day dawn that shall admit us into the praising society above who praise him day and night without weariness and without interruption. Let the praises of our Redeemer be our daily exercise in secret and in our families, and let the light of our conversation so shine before men that they may see our good works, our steadfastness and advances in the work of the Lord may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and let us employ our abilities,

ties, our time and our talents, in our several stations, so as to recommend him to the love and esteem of others, especially to those who are to act upon the stage of the world when we of this generation must of course be mingled with the silent dead, which is the only way we can now contribute to the perpetuating his glory and dominion. How much do we fail of our duty that are ministers of the gospel, if we do not thus travail as it were in birth till Christ be formed in the souls of our flocks. How much are you to blame who are parents and masters of families if you do not exert yourselves in recommending this Jesus Christ to your children and servants, by your example, by your instructions; by prayer and praise in your families spread a favour of the knowledge of Christ, and contribute your endeavours for perpetuating the glory and dominion of this blessed one to the next generation, especially if you have been communicants. How faulty are all of us if we are wanting by our prayers at least in the most private station we can be in to seek the prosperity of his kingdom, his glory and dominion: which leads to the last thing observable,

4. In the doxology, *Amen*, so let it be, in testimony of the strength and earnestness of our desires that Christ may be glorified, and his authority chearfully acknowledged by ourselves and others in the manner you have heard now urged. We should have an amen as hearty to our praises as to our prayers, and say with the same cordial and earnest desire, To him be glory and dominion for ever, as we are ready to say, Jesus,

Lord,

Lord, have mercy on us, or amen, so it shall be; and then it signifies the strength of our faith and truth, as well as our joy and delight to think that in defiance of all the opposition of hell and ungodly men on earth His name shall endure for ever, and His memorial unto all generations; that race unto race shall praise him, and a seed shall do him service and perpetuate his name and righteousness from age to age, till time shall be no more; that men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed, till the dispersed of Israel be gathered into one glorious assembly to sing the praises of their God and Redeemer through the boundless ages of eternity, in the triumphant and never ending strains of *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto God kings and priests. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X V .

Thanksgiving after the holy Supper.

Slains, July 28, 1746.

Pfalm cxvi. 9.

I will walk before the Lord in the Land of the living.

I Shall not detain you with useleſs enquiries about the particular occaſion of this pfalm's compoſure, or who was the inſpired penman of it, ſince it is enough to our purpoſe juſt to obſerve That the words now read, are one of theſe deliberate, wiſe and grateful reſolutions which this good man formed and purſued thro' life, as a teſtimony of his thankfulneſs to God his Saviour and deliverer; who had but lately ſaved him from ſome very ſevere affliction, which threatned him with utter ruin: which he deſcribes ver. 3, and 8. *The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and ſorrow. For thou haſt delivered my ſoul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* In this deplorable condition, like a poor helpleſs indigent perishing creature, he flies to his well known, and on all former occaſions experienced refuge and helper; v. 4. *Then called*

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Upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. And at the sixth verse, with a heart overflowing with the sincerest gratitude, and a mouth full of the high praises of the divine grace, mercy, faithfulness, power and wisdom; he ascribes the glory of all to his almighty God.

But he rests not in mere empty compliment and a flaming profession by words: no! he adds with the same warmth of devotion, ver. 12. *What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?* Then how naturally does he fall into a train of the wisest and best resolutions, which when they are deliberately formed and firmly pursued thro' life, in a dependence upon grace, are a sacrifice of thanksgiving more acceptable to God than all the beasts of the field, or the cattle on a thousand hills; as you read in the fiftieth psalm from the seventh to the sixteenth verse. And what were these? *I love him; I will call on him as long as I live; I will take the cup of salvation; I will pay my vows to the Lord; I will serve him truly;* and which is the sum of all in the words of our reading, *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.*

At first view it is evident how much it is the duty of every one that would be approved of God, to put on the same holy resolutions; when a like gracious interposition for their deliverance and safety in the day of their temporal and spiritual distresses is given them by the God of their life; and it is as clear that this is a temper of mind greatly becoming such of us as have been yesterday at the Lord's table making the most solemn
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and public profession of love and obedience to Jesus Christ our Saviour from sin and from hell thus to praise the author of our salvation, thus to love him, and thus to resolve to walk before God in the land of the living. And, christians, if you have been honest and worthy communicants, you are not altogether strangers to these warm sentiments of love and gratitude to God your Creator, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier; to these deliberate and sincere resolutions of obedience, and these upright endeavours on a dependence on the grace of God to pursue and make good these resolutions which the psalmist breathes out throughout this psalm; at least it is the hardest thing in nature to think how it is possible that our communicating can either be of use to ourselves or acceptable to God without these things. Suffer me then,

First, To explain a little upon the meaning or import of this resolution, *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*;

Secondly, Recommend the putting it into practice from the blessed advantages that will accrue to the happy soul that is enabled and disposed thus to resolve and thus to practise.

I. I return to the first of these, namely, to explain a little on the meaning or import of this resolution, *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*; and here I hope I need not spend words in telling you that it is a metaphor frequently made use of in scripture to represent the christian life or serious godliness, by a way which every man who would come to heaven must walk in: Narrow is the way that leads to

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life, that is, to eternal life, said our Lord, Mat. vii. 13. Holiness in heart, and holiness in all manner of conversation lead to life, do not indeed in strict justice merit life, but it is the indispensable, unalterable, and only way to come to it by the appointment of heaven; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord, besides that no other disposition of mind or practice could make heaven agreeable, or an easy and an happy place to us; for what fellowship or communion can light have with darkness, or Christ with Belial, or righteousness and holiness with unrighteousness and impurity. So that when the words are stript of the metaphor, the resolution amounts to this, I will be truly religious before the Lord, under a sense of his being ever present with me as my witness now, and who will be my impartial judge hereafter. Thus Enoch's religion is described, that he walked with God, Gen. v. 24. and this same psalmist, that he set the Lord always before him, Psal. xvi. 8. and in this sense it has the eloquent Roman's advice to his pupil, as one of the best and easiest rules of behaviour, Always to speak, act, and employ himself whether alone or in company, as if Cato or Scipio stood by him and observed and was to pass a judgment upon what he said, thought, or did. But it is an infinitely higher and holier presence that the psalmist here realizes; and we all should realize as looking upon us, and who will pass a judgment upon us and all that we do before it is long. He adds, this I will do in the land of the living, which may be understood either of the disadvantage the place and company

company he was in would be to his carrying his resolution into practice; the land of the living, where there are but few that are truly religious, and where many inconveniencies from example, from hope, from fear, from within me, and from without me, may stand up to discourage me in this resolution; but all these notwithstanding, I am fixed, and through grace I will face and conquer too every opposition, and will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, though that land generally speaking lies in wickedness. Or it may be understood of his resolution to persevere in this good way to the end of his life, that is, as he expresses it, ver. 2. *As long as I live I will walk before the Lord.* But more particularly,

1. The psalmist here resolves (and we should have been resolving yesterday) to keep his mind ever under a certain and fixed persuasion of the being and perfections of the eternal God, as an infinite mind who knows all things, and fills all places, a most pure and all comprehending Spirit, who is not the less real or the farther from us for his being invisible to our mortal eyes, but as intimately present with us as our own very souls are with our bodies: a being ever blessed and all sufficient, deriving no glory nor felicity from another, but communicating all that blessedness that is any where enjoyed throughout the whole creation, whose wisdom none can search, the holiness of whose nature, works and ways is glorious and unspotted, whose justice weighs all persons and actions in a most equal balance, whose power can execute all his plea-

sure, whether it be to effect mighty things for them that fear him, or to bring about strange acts of judgment against the wicked and them that fear him not, whose truth and faithfulness fail not. Thus much of God, christians, the wiser heathens could investigate, and realize, and deduce from their observations of this awful deity, a great many of these obligations which his reasonable creatures were under, to mind, to think of, and to reverence his presence, and act up to the dignity of their immortal natures in doing justly, in loving mercy, and walking humbly before that God who is above us, around us, and within us. But all this of God that was known by them left them under dreadful anxiety, perplexing doubts and dread of him from the consciousness of their own guilt, the depravity of their natures, and their total ignorance of the manner of appeasing him, and such like, which is all now clearly revealed to us under the gospel, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God and Father thro' him, whom he sent into the world out of his abundant love to seek and to save us in our low and lost estate, to die under the imputation of our guilt, and by the sacrifice of himself bring about our reconciliation with the offended majesty in the heavens, to remove that terror and difficulty which a sinful creature feels in approaching the holy presence of God, by becoming our Advocate with the Father, as well as the propitiation for our sins; to instruct us in the great doctrines of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, to assure us of
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mercy upon the most honourable and moving terms, if we will come and yield ourselves to his mediation, and so believe in him and obey him, as that he might bring us back to God, to provide a fresh supply of strength and supernatural aids and assistance by the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, which he encourages us to ask of our heavenly Father in his name, with an assurance that we shall receive, and to secure our final acceptance with God if we are sincerely endeavouring to please him; he has brought to light an everlasting righteousness to cover our manifold imperfections, wherein we come short of that perfection which his law demands and requires of us. This is that amiable light wherein the gospel places the mercy and grace of God to encourage us sinful and imperfect creatures to realize his presence with us with pleasure, and to quicken our resolutions and put life into our endeavours to purify ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, in perfecting holiness in his fear, and to attempt cheerfully to walk before him in the land of the living, before him, I say, who knows our frame, who remembers we are but dust, and is ready and willing to hold us by our right hand and show us like pity and acceptance in our weak and simple efforts to please him in the methods of worship and obedience as a tender father is ready to show to his poor, infirm, imperfect, but willing and toward child.

2. This resolution means not only to keep our minds ever under a fixed persuasion of the being and perfections of God as they are manifested

from the light of nature, and more clearly and suitably to our present fallen state discovered in the gospel revelation, but also to supply ourselves to the whole compass of our duty towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves, as under the eye and in the presence of this great and good being, and therefore it is called a walking, or as I have explained it, a being truly religious before the Lord in the land of the living.

A sense of God's presence must go with us, that is into every duty of immediate worship; It must go with us into every considerable change and circumstance of our lot; it must go with us into all our particular actions and dealings with men, and in the conduct of ourselves.

1. It must go with us into every duty of immediate worship. A real christian is distinguished from the ungodly part of mankind by this designation, that he delights to honour and worship God in all the appointed institutions of religion and devotion, in public, in his family, and in secret; and in all these acts of devotion we ought to carry a respectful sense of the greatness, the goodness, the holiness, and the mercy of the object of worship with us, that we may serve him as a Being neither to be trifled with or deceived, we must serve him as one that is not to be put off with any thing unworthy of him or that would make him appear such an one as ourselves: and surely there is little good done by people saying their prayers, hearing sermons, reading the word, communicating, or attending any part of divine worship, if they once lose their reverence of God, the sense of the need they

they have of the mediation of Christ, and the aids of the divine Spirit, it is this that puts life into our devotion, without this they are but a dead carcass, we want the soul and spirit of devotion, and so can find but little acceptance and as little advantage by the most laborious exercises of it, as our Lord tells us plainly, John iv. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* It is such spiritual worshippers the Father seeketh.

2. This sense of God as he has made himself known to us must go with us through every considerable change and circumstance of our lot in this life whether prosperous or adverse. *I know,* saith the royal Preacher, Eccles. iii. 14. *that whatsoever God doth it shall be for ever;* nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it, and God doth that in order that men may fear him and be religious, or, in the words of my text, walk before him. If we are in circumstances of safety, or free from fears of outward calamities, such an easy condition of life is designed and ought to promote in us the life of God, 1 Sam. xii. 24, 45. *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you: but if you shall do wickedly you shall be consumed.* If we enjoy fruitful seasons, and dwell in a land of plenty, and enjoy the free exercise of our religion, then the rule is, To eat of our corn and wine and oil, and the firstlings of the herds and flocks, that we may learn to fear the Lord our God always, Deut. xiv. 23. If we have been in affliction and trouble of a temporal or spirit-

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ual nature, and God has heard our supplications, we are then taught to adore him who is great and does wondrous things, Isa. lxxvi. 1, to 10. and the prayer we are taught there to put up to him is this, ver. 11. *Teach me thy way, O God, &c.* On the other hand, when God sends trouble and afflictions we are taught to humble ourselves, 1 Pet. v. 6. Some are cut off for their sins and made terrible examples of the danger of provoking God; it is for this end that those who remain may hear and fear, and henceforth no more commit any such evil, and it is a most hainous aggravation of the impiety of those whose iniquities have turned away their mercies, that they are not brought to say in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God. Thus to acknowledge God and grow more religious by every change in our lot is to walk before God.

3. This sense of God must go with us thro' every particular action in our dealings with others, and in the conduct of ourselves. This cannot be better expressed than in those words of Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 17. *Let not thine heart envy sinners.* That is, do not envy the sinful irregular part of the world, either in their pursuit of worldly things to the neglect of their eternal welfare, or their enjoyment of them in all the licentious methods of surfeiting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness; do not envy them in their manner of life, in their pride, setting their mouths against the heavens, and causing their outrageous tongues walk through the whole earth, Psal. lxxiii. and covering themselves with violence as with a garment.

ment; do not envy them in their casting God's cords from them and breaking his bands asunder, nor imitate them in their impatience to govern themselves by the wise and beneficial restraints of religion, by the eye and presence of God, and the sense of their own accountableness; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: that is, think with reverence of thy God, and of the care and kindness of heaven with gratitude; in the morning rise to thy devotion, seek his favour through the mediation of Christ, and beg his good Spirit's direction and assistance through the day; consult the law of thy God, and resolve to practise it in the business of the day; set a godly and a righteous example before thy children and servants, and provide honest things for them in the sight of all men, if thou hast a family, and call them stately to worship the living God with thee. In thy dealings with others do justly, love mercy as well as walk humbly with thy God, for so the Lord thy Maker, thy Redeemer, and thy Judge requires of thee; acknowledge the hand of heaven in all thy prosperous undertakings, and rob not the poor of the tribute of thy labour and increase that is due unto them. Slight no advantage and opportunity which providence puts in thy hand, either for promoting thy own spiritual advantage or even temporal interest and usefulness, nay nor that of others, even those that are thy most malicious haters and enemies, nor weary in doing good unto all, especially unto the household of faith, though thou shouldest have met with the most ungrateful returns from men on
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former occasions; make thy heart and thy words ever agree, and look daily to Jesus that amiable pattern of all righteousness, as well as thy merciful advocate and perfect propitiation for thy iniquities, thy slips and thy imperfections; and implore his grace to make thee every day wiser and better.

3. This resolution farther imports, our thus walking before the Lord in the land of the living notwithstanding all the disadvantages of the place and company to hinder our carrying this resolution into practice while we are in this vain, sinful, imperfect state, where it is but the few who are truly religious, and it hath been so in all ages, and a dreadful snare to thousands that the multitude have been doers of evil, and they have blindly followed them: especially if the cause of religion has been ever deserted and opposed by those who are called our betters, or our superiors, oh! how obsequiously poor spirited people who, having no principle of religion, cringe and fawn, and ape them even in their very vices; but this good man was otherwise set, and every good christian must resolve and make it good in a dependence upon grace whatever others do, whatever rank, or numbers, or high degrees, ungodly men are of to part ways with them in their wickedness, otherwise there is no help if we partake with them in their sins, we must lay our account with it to lose the favour of God almighty, and partake with them in their plagues too.

There is again the temptation of worldly interest and advantage, many times on the side of vice in the land of the living, to weaken the force.

force of our resolutions to walk before the Lord: the necessities of some, the covetousness and love of money in others, and an ambitious affection to be well with those that bear a bulk in the little concerns of this vain sinful life, tempts many to drown themselves in destruction and perdition; and few have Moses' resolution and steadiness to esteem the reproach of Christ, greater honour, greater riches, and a more eligible thing than treasures and honours on earth; or pleasant and profitable, and prosperous iniquity and transgression. Fear again of losing the paltry prospects and advantages of life or suffering hardships for being religious before God; terrifies not a few from prosecuting this wise resolution, so our Saviour tells in the parable of the sower, that there were many that heard the word of God, and with joy received it: and ye would think they were come to a point to walk before God in the land of the living, but behold persecution and the fear of tribulation that arises because of the word instantly shakes them out of all their steadiness and they are offended, it was not so with the psalmist, nor must it be so with us either; else we are not worthy of Christ, Mat. x. 24, to 39.

4. Or you may understand it of his firm resolution to persevere in the good ways of God to his life's end; and indeed the resolution will be good for nothing at all if we drop this circumstance out of it, and the reason is clear, because to resolve or even to make it good to walk before God in the land of the living for a time, and revolt from God again and withdraw our allegiance,

ance, and return with the dog to his vomit, is to act in a flat contradiction to all the divine purposes revealed in the gospel, and if such a thing could be reconciled with the hopes of God's favour, the gospel would defeat its own end, and the grace of God so gloriously therein revealed would overturn his government. No! christians you are told in the gospel, that we must die with the weapons of our warfare in our hands, and hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: we must be faithful to the death and reap only in case we faint not, but if any man draw back God's soul will have no pleasure in him. And this leads me to the second general head proposed, namely,

II. To recommend the putting this good resolution into practice from the happy advantage that will accrue to the soul that forms it deliberately, and through grace is enabled to execute it. And,

1. In this way we shall be preserved from the most hateful and destructive power of sin, Psal. xxxvi. 1, 2. A man void of true religion flatters himself continually that either he is guilty of little or no sin, or else that he shall escape well enough though he should practise some ill things. Thus wanting the great principle that should restrain him, or recover him from iniquity, he goes from one degree of sin to another, till he become hateful in the sight of God and man: I am sure every day's experience confirms this.

2. By being truly religious before God in the land of the living, many deserved judgments are prevented, and many temporal calamities which
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ness whither we are going. Hezekiah's great support when under a sentence of death was, *Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart,* Isa. xxxviii.

3. And when this body of sin is put off, we shall walk before God without sinning any more, and shall have none of the little concerns, vexations, or temptations of this world, to call us off from serving the Lord, Rev. xxii. 14. while on the other side, if we want sincerity of heart religion will avail us nothing; It is not saying Lord, Lord, calling upon the name of Christ in acts of worship, communicating and the like, that will make us truly subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom, if at the same time, we are not doers of the will of our Father that is in heaven, Mat. vii. 24. or in other words, walk not before the Lord in the land of the living.

6. Finally, the more hearty we are in this resolution, and the more warmly we pursue it, seems to be the only remaining way left to revive a sense of piety and religion in the world, which every one is ready to own is upon the decay; what can you mention that deadens and discourages the hearts of those that are walking before the Lord, or that discredits those good ways in the esteem of others so much as the seeing communicants, ministers and others, professors of christianity, falling into formalities and worldly compliances, and fashioning themselves according to this world, and setting up earthly concerns above those of religion and godliness; or what is there in all the world that does so much raise and invigorate a good man's spirit,
and

and draw the attention of good and bad about him, as a steady disinterested and unaffected walking before God in the land of the living? This would make christians singular, whether they designed to be or not: that is, singularly good, singularly exemplary, singularly shining, as lights in the world, doing more than others, singular in bearing much fruit, and in glorifying their Father in heaven, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. This would do more than the most learned reasonings or the nicest speculations, this would do more than crafty politics and servile compliances, or any zeal about lesser things, to convince the world of the excellency of religion; here is the best and most effectual provocative to love and good works, and the most easy and reputable way of engaging the professors of religion more heartily to esteem and stand up for it, and those that are enemies to religion to be ashamed of themselves and come over to the profession and practice of it, as well as laying up in store for ourselves to shine another day among those that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Application. Upon the whole then, let all communicants, let all within hearing be persuaded to resolve and be at a point speedily and for ever hence forward to say and do, *I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living; or Psalm. cxix. 115. Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God;* and let not any soul among us be longer blinded and deaf to their own best interest, and provoke the great Lord of the vineyard after all his patience and

pains and messages of grace; this is a fruitless fig-tree, *cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* And for directions,

1. Awe your minds with a deep sense of the certain danger of being irresolute and careless in this matter; no privileges, no profession, nothing will avail us another day without this. If we live after the flesh we shall die.

2. Fix on your minds a deep sense of the eye of God that is upon you at all times, and the account you must give ere long of your whole conduct in this life at his tribunal. Consider how much more the eye and the approbation of God is to thee, and that thou hast more to do with him than with all the world besides, that there is no place lies out of the sight of his all-seeing eye, nor no condition can put thee beyond the reach of his almighty arm; and oh, then think what poor contemptible things the vanities of life, the pleasures of sin, the terrors or the allurements of a present world are when laid in the balance with his almighty love, or with his almighty wrath.

3. Bear in remembrance what you did yesterday. Look on a bleeding dying Saviour as a mean to keep thy heart melted and soft with a daily grief for thy past sins, to arm thee daily against the face of temptations, to after sinning, and to constrain thee by his dying love to live no more to thyself, but to him who died for thee and hath bought you with so costly a price, to glorify God and walk before him with thy soul and body, which are his, and made over to his service by your own professed deed and choice.

4. Watch

4. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, was a direction given by the Lord himself to the communicants after the first communion that was ever administred; and finally,

5. As all our own watchful endeavours, and humble supplications, and best vows and resolutions, which we are exceeding prone to forget and remit, will not be sufficient of themselves, let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Balance your own resolutions and endeavours with a humble sense of your need of the daily influence of the divine Spirit of God to strengthen and uphold you in the way of God's testimonies, and to keep you mindful that when you have done all you are but unprofitable servants: and therefore renouncing all trust and dependence in your own righteousness, lay the stress of your eternal all upon the perfect righteousness of the glorious Surety of the better Testament; in the words of this same good psalmist, Psal. lxxi. 16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness even of thine only.* I add no more.

S E R M O N X V I .

Thanksgiving after the holy Supper.

Logie, July 16, 1750.

Ephesians v. 1. 

Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.

THE apostle in the preceding chapter had described, in a most lively manner, on the one side, the most odious nature of sin in all its abominable effects upon the tempers and lives of the children of disobedience, and which in a special manner was the case with these Ephesians to whom he wrote, before their conversion to christianity; and on the other side, the amiable beauty of holiness, as taught in the gospel, and exemplified in the lives of real christians, who have put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. God himself is the author of this renovation by his holy Spirit, and God himself is the pattern and example after which this new man is formed in the soul; it consists in a conformity of our natures to the holy nature of God, and in a conformity of our lives to the holy law of God, and then

then closes his description with the exhortation in the text, *Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children*; as if he had said, It is not a bare profession of the religion of Christ that will entitle us to the privileges of christianity, or to the character of the dear children of God, without an imitation of his moral perfections in the temper and disposition of our minds, and in the tenor and course of our conversations.

What the apostle here told the Ephesians in this epistle will hold true of all the professors of christianity to the end of time; our being named by the name of Christ, our eating and drinking in his presence and at his table, his being preached in our synagogues, are indeed admirably fit means, and lay us under inviolable obligations to be followers, or as the word might be more literally rendered, imitators of God as dear children; but still all these means may be misimproved and misapplied, and all these obligations may be forgotten by us, and in that case they will avail us nothing, they will leave us as they found us, the children of disobedience, and will only serve to aggravate our condemnation, and render us speechless another day.

Let me then, christians, beg your attention to an argument of the greatest importance to all of us within hearing, especially to you who were yesterday at the Lord's table under the colours of his dear children: and in discoursing on this argument I shall, as God enables me,

First, Explain what is meant by the children of God, here called dear children;

Secondly, I shall explain the duty, with its proper limitations;

Thirdly.

Thirdly, I shall show the obligations those who are the children of God come under to be followers or imitators of God; or state the connexion between the character and the duty: and close with some application. I return to the first of these, namely,

I. What is here meant by the children of God. God in scripture is stiled the Father of all, Eph. iii. 15. that is, the whole family of rational creatures, angels and men, and in other places they are stiled the Sons of God.

By sin God's intelligent creatures forfeit the benefit of this relation to God as a Father, and become strangers and aliens, which is the case of mankind since their apostasy, who by nature are children of wrath as they are become children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. that is, they are no longer looked upon as his children, but cast off as fit objects of his wrath and displeasure, till by their repentance and conversion to God thro' the mediation of Christ they become effectually convinced of the folly and unreasonableness of sin, and forsake it with grief, and sorrow, and shame, and return as far as in them lies to their Father, and hence desiring again to have access to his favour and mercy through Christ; and God by accepting their repentance for Christ's sake, and pardoning their sins and giving them the assistance of his holy Spirit to sanctify them for the future, receives them again as a gracious Father, and adopts them for his sons; or, in the apostle's language, gives them the spirit of adoption whereby they cry, Abba, Father, and they become again fellow citizens with the saints, and

and of the household of God ; this is what the scripture elsewhere calls regeneration or the new birth, and sometimes the new creation, and the new man, describing such persons as being in a spiritual sense created anew unto good works, and born not of blood nor of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13. being born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. The plain meaning of all the figurative expressions being this, That when a sinner is savingly awakened to a sense of the evil of sin, and sincerely returns to his duty to God through Christ, and sets about the amendment of his life in good earnest, God who considers our woeful state by nature, and remembereth we are but dust, pities the poor returning prodigal even as a father pitieth his children, and tho' in strictness of estimation he be indeed no more worthy to be called his son, yet for the sake of Christ's death and mediation, upon the sinner's true repentance, he receives him again into the arms of his mercy, and says, I will be his God, and he shall be my son. Thus, my son was lost and is found, was dead and is alive. Now answerable to this account of God's becoming our reconciled Father through Christ, it is manifest that the title of children, of his dear children, on our part is expressive of the highest obligations of duty and obedience, and of our stedfastly persevering in the practice of our duty to him ; the depravity from which originally caused those who by creation were naturally the sons of God to become strangers and enemies to him ; so by returning to it again and by no other method
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whatsoever can they who through wicked works have been strangers and enemies to God become again through the divine mercy and the mediation of Christ the sons of God by adoption, or in the words of the text, his dear children. As a child naturally takes after the father, and a child dearly beloved and truly affectionate will doubly study to please a kind father and walk in his steps, so should we imitate God as dear children. Which brings me to the second general head proposed, namely,

II. To explain the duty with its proper limitations, and in its full extent: and here it is very evident,

I. That all imitation of God must be understood to be an imitation of his moral or communicable attributes only, and not of his incommunicable; to prevent mistake here, in his omniscience, his supreme power and authority, and his dominion, and unerring knowledge, to thunder with a voice like God would be arrogant and diabolical. Our imitation of God must be the reverse of this, like that of dear children, not affecting to live without our heavenly Father, or to set up for a power and authority like his, but to be subject to him and to copy after his example in holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness, mercy and compassion, and such like; and even in these moral excellencies our imitation of him is an imitation of likeness and not of equality; this the apostle fitly expresses by the metaphor in the text, namely, that of a toward and affectionate child learning to imitate the actions and manners of a wise man

man and a kind parent; *Be ye followers of God as dear children*: the very expression carries with it, that though there may be a faint likeness, yet there is still a vast disproportion between the perfections of the original and the copy, suitable to the weak nature of such faint, imperfect and fallible creatures as we are.

2. Though our imitation of the moral perfections of God is always to be understood with this great limitation, as being an imitation of likeness and not of equality, yet we ought always to consider that it is our duty still to improve and advance unto a greater degree of likeness to our great pattern, a perfect and most exact example is set before us to imitate, that aiming always at that which is most excellent, we may grow perpetually, and make a continual progress in the ways of God, and though we can never come up to our pattern itself, yet by such imitations as our frail natures are capable of through the aids of the good Spirit of God, which are never wanting to the soul that sincerely asks them for this good purpose, we may attain to what the apostle calls being made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. which participation of true holiness after the image of him that created us is truly and in a proper sense the comparative perfection of our imperfect nature, as absolute perfection is the perfection of the prime nature, which clearly explains the meaning and extent of Paul's exhortation, 2 Cor. viii. 1. that we should perfect holiness in the fear of God; and that advice of our Saviour himself, Matth. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect,*

fect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. And now the limitations of the duty on one side, and its extent on the other, being observed; hence,

3. It is evident wherein the nature of the duty itself consists, namely, that we endeavour in a dependence on the grace of God to grow every day more like our heavenly Father in these moral perfections of his nature, such as,

1. In his holiness, which is that disposition of the divine nature by which he is removed infinitely from sin, or all moral evil, 1 Pet. i. 15. The word holiness is often in your mouths, but, christians, be at pains to understand its meaning, and copy it. Holiness signifies originally in the Jewish language, separation from common use, and in that sense all the vessels and furniture of the temple were stiled holy in the old testament, in the same sense it is used of persons also employed in the service of God, who were entitled to this external or nominal holiness whether they truly deserved that character or not. But the word is used in a better sense when it is transferred from this literal to a moral signification, a man's being separated by true religion and piety from the vicious practices of a corrupt world that lies in wickedness, and when it is applied to God it signifies his infinite distance from every degree of moral evil whatsoever; so that to imitate our heavenly father in his holiness, we must cease to govern ourselves by sinful passions and appetites, by fleshly and worldly lusts, we must study to have ourselves purged from falsehood, guilt, envy, malice, and every

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evil inclination and corrupt affection, because there is no such impure mixture in the mind and thoughts of our heavenly Father: in cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, in subduing and crucifying them, and gaining every day a greater mastery over them lies our imitating the divine purity and holiness. Or as he that has called us is holy, becoming holy, separating ourselves from the vicious lusts, appetites and practices that are the common and known characters by which the children of the devil, and of disobedience are distinguished from the children of God.

In other places of scripture, particular moral attributes of God are laid before us as patterns to imitate and to walk by, as doing justly to others, in opposition to over-reaching, and fraud. This we learn from the rectitude of the divine nature in his righteous dealing with all men, 1 Pet. i. 18. 1 John iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* We are bid imitate him in his truth and faithfulness; it is the glory of God to be a God of truth, Deut. xxxii. 4. and of his children, that they are children that will not lie, Isa. lxiii. 8. And because God expressly requires us to copy after his mercy and goodness, therefore this will be ever upon the heart of one that imitates him as a dear child does. To be patient and forbearing because of God's forbearing and long suffering; to be compassionate and pitiful, because the divine nature glories and triumphs in tender mercy; to be ready to forgive,

as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; to communicate freely of our good things to the poor and the stranger, because God freely gives all good things to them that ask him: yea, to do good to our very worst enemies, because our heavenly Father showers down his blessings on the evil as well as the good, on the unjust as well as the just; add to all this that because God fainteth not neither is weary in all his works of righteousness or beneficence, therefore we should not be weary nor faint in our minds, but be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. And now I shall briefly set before you the obligations we are under to imitate God which was the

III. General head proposed, or state the connexion between the privilege of being God's dear children, and the duty of imitating his moral perfections. I might here tell you, that even among men there is no earthly father, but in these things which he esteems his own excellencies, desires and expects to be imitated by his children; how much more is it necessary that God who has the dearest concern for all his creatures, and who is infinitely far from being subject to such passions and variableness as frail men are, should desire to be imitated by his creatures in those perfections which are the foundations of his own unchangeable happiness. Particularly, if God is himself essentially of infinite holiness and purity, it plainly follows that it is impossible but he must be of purer eyes than

to behold with approbation any manner of iniquity or immorality in his creatures, Hab. i. 13. and consequently, it must be his will that they should all according to the measure of their finite nature, be holy as he is holy. If God himself is a being of infinite justice and righteousness and truth, it must be his will that all rational creatures, whom he has created after his own image, should imitate him in the exercise of these divine perfections: and lying, injustice, and unrighteousness, must be abominable in his eyes.

If God is himself a being of infinite goodness, making his sun to rise on the evil and the good, sending rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness; it cannot be but his will that man should by mutual love and benevolence permit and assist each other to enjoy the several effects and blessings of the divine universal goodness, without envy, malice, injury or hatred at one another.

If God is himself a being of infinite mercy and compassion, as it is plain he bears long with men before he punish them, and often freely forgives them his ten thousand talents, it must needs be his will that they would forgive one another their hundred pence; being merciful one to another as he is merciful to them, forbearing one another as he forbears them all, and having compassion each on his fellow servant as God has pity on them.

Again, if love towards God be an obvious and principal duty of natural religion in those who believe God to be the supreme good, it follows

follows clearly, that imitation of him also must be equally a duty of indispensible obligation, for God being essential goodness, righteousness and truth, can no otherwise have love towards him express, than by their loving and imitating those amiable perfections in their practice.

Thus the very light of nature teaches us the obligations which the children of God are under to imitate their heavenly Father; in the revelation which God has been pleased to make us of himself in scripture, the necessity of the same duty is more clearly and more expressly enforced: at the delivery of the law to Moses, the particulars of duty by which the worshippers of the true God, that is, the dear children of God were to be distinguished from the rest of the world, are introduced in this general preface to the whole, Lev. xix. 1. and xii. 44.

The New Testament apostles cite these words spoken thus from the mouth of God and urge the duty upon all professed christians, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. While a sinner persists in the wilful and known practice of any wickedness whatever, debauchery of all kinds, corruption of manners, lying, swearing falsely, swearing customarily, all sorts of impiety and contempt of God almighty, all unrighteousness and deceit in our dealings with men; uncharitableness to the poor, malice and envy, and pride, and covetousness, and every sort of brutal worldly or diabolical vice, are called in scripture an alienation from the life of God, enmity to him and given as the visible and certain characters of the children of the devil; and on the other side, when by sincere repentance, true

conversion to God thro' Christ, and real amendment of life, they return to their duty, the scripture calls it a translation from the kingdom and power of satan, into the liberty and freedom of the sons of God, and emphatically a being made partakers of the divine nature, and putting on the new-man, which after God is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, and being partakers of God's holiness, Heb. xii. 10. Being holy as God is holy, without which holiness, the scripture plainly declares no man shall see the Lord: and that we may not mistake bare attendance on the means of religion, for this holiness which consists in departing from iniquity, in ceasing to do evil, in learning to do well, or in other words, imitating the moral perfections of God as dear children; our Saviour himself tells us, that many will come to him another day saying, Lord, &c. In a word a likeness to God here or a following or imitating his moral perfections is declared in scripture, as indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of glory and happiness hereafter; and the perfections even of that glory and happiness itself principally consists in our becoming still more and more like him by the total abolishing of all sin, 1 John iii. 2.

What the full meaning of that is the apostle tells us, does not yet clearly appear; but tho' God is incomprehensible, yet both by the light of nature, and the light of revelation, we have a competent knowledge of his moral attributes, and are commanded to imitate them; and in the life of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, as well as appeared in the likeness of man, we

we have a complete example and pattern of moral perfection set before us to imitate: I have given you an example, and learn of me, saith our Saviour, and the apostles frequently remind us of this divine pattern, 1 Pet. ii. 21. and Isa. ii. 6. This is the highest excellency of the perfection of a christian to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, which whosoever is shall hereafter be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, shall arrive at the full stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus: when our Lord shall present his faithful followers and imitators faultless before the presence of his Father's glory with exceeding joy, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall serve him day and night in his temple and enjoy his uninterrupted favour for ever and ever; if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. The application of the whole yet remains.

IV. The practical uses of the subject are,
 1. Learn from what you have heard, where to find the surest mark of your being the dear children of God: and of consequence what you ought to esteem, the most substantial part of religion, namely, an imitation of the moral perfections of God, and a growing likeness to him in purity, in charity, in righteousness, in truth, and in universal holiness; and our Bibles are shut up with this plain intimation from him, whose disciples we now profess to be, Rev. xxii. 12. to 17.

2. Let us all then apply ourselves, communicants, and others, to subdue every brutal, every worldly, and every malevolent lust and affection

in us, that render us unlike God and his dear children, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, or in the words of the apostle after the text.

3. Let impenitent sinners read the fifth psalm from the first verse and tremble. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: Let the wicked man forsake his way, &c. Isa. lv. 7. And let us be thankful to God for the advantages and encouragements the gospel affords for this purpose, the clear notices of the perfections we are to imitate, the gracious promise of the grace of the holy Spirit, and of eternal life at the end of our warfare.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X V I I .

Galatians vi. 9.

Let us not weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not

THE apostle in these words recommends unto us a most necessary and comprehensive duty; namely, an unwearied perseverance in well doing, and I hope you who were yesterday at the Lord's table especially, and every one within hearing will look upon yourselves as deeply concerned to understand it aright in order to practise it thro' the residue of your time in life, that you may reap the good fruits of well doing another day. Give me leave then in a dependence on divine assistance, in the first place to explain the nature of well doing: *Let us not weary in well doing*, says the apostle.

I. To do well then, obviously consists in three things; That we be truly religious towards God; that we be truly honest, and as useful as may be to others, and that we keep ourselves within the bounds that God has set us for the right government of ourselves. I said that to do well consists, 1. In being truly religious towards God; that is, That we devoutly reverence, adore and
worship

worship almighty God, who is our great sovereign and judge, as becomes creatures whom he has endowed with the power of reason and understanding: and as we cannot approach him as innocent creatures, that we humble ourselves before him because we have often offended him, and beg his mercy thro' the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ our advocate with the Father; that we pray to him in the name of Christ for the supply of all our wants, the pardon of all our sins, and praise him for all the blessings and benefits which we daily receive from his hand; that we love and esteem him above all, with all our souls, with all our heart, with all our strength and with all our mind; that we place our supreme trust in him, and humbly resign all our concerns into the wise and righteous disposal of his providence; that we not only avoid every thing that may show a disregard to his divine Majesty, but on the contrary, endeavour constantly and with the utmost attention to conform the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our actions to the law he has given us, whether natural or written on our hearts, or revealed as contained in the gospel of his Son. This is one branch of well doing, Micah vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God,* and Tit. ii. 11, 12. The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us to live godly in this present evil world. But,

2. I said that well doing consists in being honest and as useful as possible to others. That in all

our dealings with our fellow men, we pay the most sacred regard to that general rule; of all honest and righteous dealings, prescribed us by our Lord and master, Mat. vii. 12. *whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

A conscientious regard to which rule would naturally teach us to avoid every thing that would hurt and injure our neighbour's soul or body, or good name, or property; and to abstain from all malicious wronging or withholding from our neighbour his due, or defrauding and oppressing him when it is in our power, any more than we would wish our neighbour to hurt or defraud or oppress us when it is in his power to do so to us. And to this branch of well doing, which consists in dealing honestly to others, we ought always to add an endeavour to be as useful to others likewise as we are able, the former is called by the name of justice, this by the amiable name of mercy and charity, and in this last sense, it is well doing to the souls of men, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim those that are in an evil way by our prudent admonitions and good counsel, to comfort the troubled in spirit, and such like, which is one of the noblest instances of well doing, in as much as it betters and relieves the minds of men; and hath a tendency to promote their most lasting felicity; and next to that is, to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, to visit the sick and imprisoned, and to relieve the oppressed and such like; all this is well doing, Micah vi. 8. and Tit. ii. 11, 12. But farther,

3. Well doing consists in keeping ourselves within

within these bounds that God has set for the right government of ourselves: such as contentment with our lot and condition in this world, without envying and grieving at the better circumstances of others, or distrusting God almighty's care, and murmuring at his wise allotments for us: that we bear Christ's yoke and learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart, having our affections chiefly set on things that are above and not on things that are on earth; that hence we be temperate in all things using moderation in meat and in drink, and clothing and other accommodations of life, neither denying ourselves what is needful in our stations, nor going beyond our necessities and circumstances, merely to indulge our sensual appetites and ease, and thereby prevent ourselves from being able to do justice to others; or even to hinder our being able to spare something to lay out in acts of charity and mercy; and especially, that we abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. but confine ourselves within the rules of purity and chastity in heart speech and behaviour. This is also well doing, according to the apostle in that forecited Tit. ii. 11, 12. and another apostle tells us, that all the great and precious promises of the gospel are given us, that by them we may be made partakers of such a God like temper and disposition, and evidence the same in our whole conversation, by adding to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and brotherly kindness and charity; having escaped the corruptions that are in the world thro' lust, 2 Pet. i. 4.

The practice of these divine virtues and graces, is the end and design of all religion: by the light of nature and reason, men are taught the obligations they are under to well doing. In this consisted the glory and dignity of human nature in its first creation, and to restore mankind to their original holiness and happiness from which they degenerated by ill doing was one great end of God's sending them his Son from heaven, to be an instructor and pattern as well as a propitiation for their sins. Well doing is the restoration of the image of God on our souls, and renders us like God who is good and does good, who is glorious in holiness, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without abhorrence and detestation; well doing makes us in our measure also resemble the Son of God, who when he was pleased to take our nature upon him, set us an example of the most punctual regard to all the duties of piety towards God, righteousness and mercy towards men, and humility, meekness, temperance, and purity in the government of himself: well doing is the employment and the pleasure of the highest order of God's intelligent creatures, the blessed angels who are swift as a flame of fire to do the will of God, and are all ministering Spirits for the good of men. Having now explained the nature and excellence of well doing, I proceed with the apostle to observe,

II. Which is the next thing considerable in the words, That we must not weary but persevere in well doing; let us not weary, an exhortation extremely needful, in the days of our apostles to the converts to christianity in the
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infant age of christianity; when all who would live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution in the literal and highest sense, behoved to maintain their course of well doing, by a continued opposition to the powers of this world, and persecution, afflictions and distresses, and even the most violent deaths attended them in every step of their conflict, by which they were wearied out and tempted to deny the truth, and to renounce that holy religion which they had embraced, by turning again from their well doing into all the idolatries and immoralities of the heathen: and indeed my christian friends, a hard and difficult thing it was to resist that great, that fiery trial, and to resist even unto blood, choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God in a patient continuance in well doing, than enjoy the pleasures of sin and the enjoyments of life for a season. Blessed be God that it is not our lot at present to be so tried, and blessed be they, they and their seed in all generations who fill the throne of these kingdoms, and are our protection from the persecutions for righteousness sake, wherewith our protestant brethren in many of the popish countries in Europe, are at this day severely exercised; yet still the exhortation of the apostle's ought to be deliberately and carefully attended to by us; let us not weary, in as much as abstracting even from open persecution, the temptations of a corrupt and sinful world are sufficient to weary us out if we be left alone to struggle in them, and hence it is that the life of a christian is so often compared in scripture to a warfare; fight the good fight, said Paul to

Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 12. and of himself, 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* And throughout inculcates upon us, that the thing proposed for which we are entered into Christ's service, and engaged in a patient continuance in well doing, is happiness and life eternal. The enemies which are represented as soliciting us to weary and give over, and opposing us, and would hinder us from attaining that happiness, are the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and blessed God, how many are they, and how powerfully and successfully do they work to the utter ruin, and undoing of thousands, who seem to have begun well and yet weary and give over, and fall from their steadfastness and draw back into perdition; the reward is not promised to them who shall engage in this warfare, but only to these who endure unto the end. Our Saviour warns us plainly, that no man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is meet for the kingdom of God. After we have been doing well in the full latitude in which you have heard it explained, we must not sit down and say, we have done enough; there will be still new occasions and new opportunities for the exercise of our piety towards God, and of honest dealings, and doing justice, humility and self denial, and temperance, and charity, and new objects for the exercise of our charity; I say there will be new occasions, and new opportunities, and new objects of well doing still springing up and presenting themselves to us, and let us never think we can do enough in the way of doing good in defiance

ance of all the temptations to the contrary we may meet with; the best and happiest beings are most constant and unwearied in this work of doing good, the holy angels are continually employed in serving and worshipping, and obeying their Creator, and ministering for the good of these who shall be heirs of salvation; and the Son of God went about doing good unweariedly while he lived on earth, it was his meat and drink, the joy and pleasure of his life. I now proceed to the last general head, namely, The argument or encouragement of our perseverance: in due time we shall reap, if we faint not, that is, Sooner or later in this world or the next.

1. In this world we shall reap the satisfaction of well doing in our own minds; and there is possibly no pleasure the mind of man is capable of, comparable to that of doing good; I remember some where to have read of Cato the elder a heathen, that he was wont to say in his old age, that if in the days of youth and thro' life he had laid in no comfort and joy for that time of infirmity and distress, the melancholy reflexion in his own mind, upon a life of purity and righteousness and temperance, and especially benevolence and kindness done to mankind, would have made the infirmities of old age quite unsupportible, but this peaceful reflexion in his own mind upon a well spent life, he was wont to say, was superior to all the pleasures he had ever tasted in life, and was the great cordial of his old age. Sinful pleasures and worldly good, and the practice of wickedness, tho' it has been even successful and prosperous leaves a sting behind it,

it, which when the pleasure is gone, galls and torments the mind with guilt, and remorse, and trouble, that is like hell begun on earth; whereas, on the contrary, godliness fills the mind with a peace and solid joy which is durable, and increaseth still the more as trouble cometh.

2. Besides this peace within us, godliness hath all the other promises even of this life annexed to it, well doing is so much done to derive a lasting blessing upon all we have, and engages the care of heaven in and over us, in well and in woe; in well, Psal. cxii. throughout, and in woe Psal. xli. 1--5. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. I said, Lord be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me: when shall he die, and his name perish? in times of public calamity and distress, Isa. v. 8, 10, 12. Wo unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hand. And gives us an interest in the prayers of all good men; how effectually does the apostle pray for the house of Onesiphorus,*

Onesiphorus, 2 Tim. i. 16. and is it a small thing to have the blessing of them that are ready to perish to come upon us, Job xxix. 12. Hence one of the fathers said, that a benevolent man must be happy and safe, because he had many to pray for him, and the prayers of many would not fail of being heard; this he observes from the passage in James; That the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.

Reflexion. How powerfully then ought the apostles exhortation to come home upon our consciences; *Let us not weary in well doing, &c.* To conclude, when we have done all these things which we are commanded, let us say, We are but unprofitable servants: we have but done that which was our duty to do, Luke xvii. 10. Let us not pretend to merit by the utmost pitch of well doing, but flee to the righteousness of Christ and beg the aids of the divine Spirit to strengthen us to do the will of our heavenly Father, and dispose us ever not to weary in well doing.

Agno mañata Gloria.

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